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Argus '89

ARGUS 1989

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Cover Design Winners

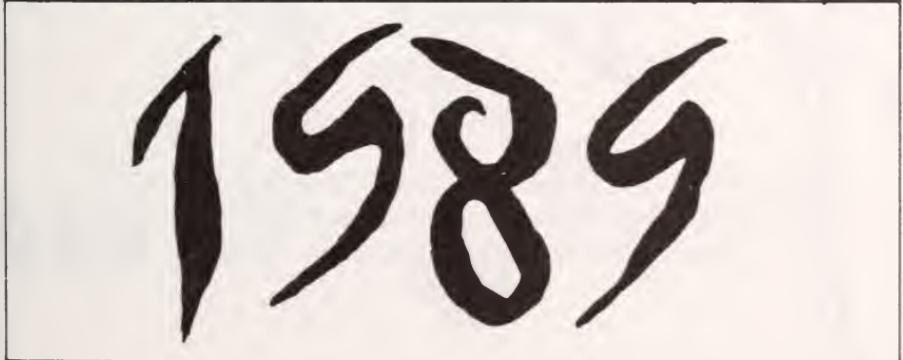
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3rd--Pamela S. Williams



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Argus Contest Winners

Fall

Poetry

First His Last Scream Before Pain--Madelyn Boudreaux
Second April...In The Year of Lord
Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-Eight--William Murphy
Third In Anita's Eyes--Meghan Larpenter

Fiction

First A Different Honor--Randall Pleasant
Second Mo's Pros--Jan Sweat
Third Delicate Swimmers--Peter Rolufs

Personal Essay

First Loss--H. Scott Jolley
Second Give It A Whirl--Liz Bonnette
Third My Greatest Victory Over Fear--Vera Dyess

One-Act Play

Self-Help With A Friend--Jason S. Martin

Spring

Poetry

First Evidence of Another Generation--William Keith
Second Old Woman of Mexico--Tabatha Thompson
Third American Rome--Nathan Land

Fiction

First **Ezra's Story**--Wayne Self
Second **On The Death of Miss Johnson's Son**--Alan
Rhodes
Third **The Beauty Pageant**--Peter Rolufs

Cover Design

First (Cover) **Lori Edborg**
Second **Nicole M. Smith**
Third **Pamela S. Williams**

Table of Contents

Poetry

Evidence of Another Generation, <i>Poems in Series</i>	
<i>William Keith</i>	1
His Last Scream Before Pain, <i>Madelyn Boudreaux</i>	5
April..., In the Year of Lord, Nineteen Hundred and	
Eighty Eight, <i>William R. Murphy</i>	6
Don't Let Me ...Think, <i>Holly Cope</i>	12
An Ocean of Blue, <i>Shari Scaife</i>	12
In Anita's Eyes, <i>Meghan Larpenter</i>	13
Louisiana Rain, <i>Michelle Gremillion</i>	15
Judging, <i>Thomas A. Zimmerman</i>	21
Crowded At The Top, <i>Michelle Gremillion</i>	22
Anxiety Itches, <i>Noel A. Ponthieux</i>	23
Ascent to Verdure, <i>Sam Jacobsen</i>	29
Anathema, <i>Sam Jacobsen</i>	32
Haiku Quartet, <i>Jason S. Martin</i>	33
"7:07 a.m., 37 degrees", <i>Sam Jacobsen</i>	34
Spectator, <i>Jason S. Martin</i>	35
How Many Insects Must Die In Order For	
Me to Make this Trip Into Town?	
<i>Tabatha Thompson</i>	40
Gypsy Child, <i>Holly Cope</i>	41
The Death of Sensuality, <i>Frederick Francois</i>	42
Muse, <i>Gynger Ingram</i>	43
Pomegranite, <i>Jeff Wingard</i>	44
Hope, <i>Jason S. Martin</i>	47
My Guts Are On This Page, <i>Brian Sanders</i>	56
Oh, No, Not You Again, Not Now!,	
<i>Gynger Ingram</i>	59
Our Reflections, <i>Madelyn Boudreaux</i>	60
Doubt, <i>Shari Scaife</i>	61
The Dreamtime, <i>Gynger Ingram</i>	65
Precision Under the Knife, <i>Kathryn Nance</i>	66
From a Circle in Space, <i>Louicreacy Ayn Sonnier</i>	66
Afterlife, <i>Gynger Ingram</i>	66
To, <i>Nicole M. Smith</i>	67
The Ravin', <i>Jeff Wingard</i>	67
Sinai Hospital 1968, <i>William Keith</i>	70
The Dancer, <i>Dave Wilkinson</i>	73
The Shady Tree, <i>Tony Alvis</i>	73
oven-hot, <i>Liz Bonnette</i>	74

American Rome, <i>Nathan Land</i>	75
Cemetery Cat, <i>Noel A. Ponthieu</i>	79
A Night in the Country, <i>Joe Weinmunson</i>	80
Jive Black Nite, <i>Tabatha Thompson</i>	82
Louisiana, <i>William Keith</i>	83
Hollow Holey Foot, <i>Tabatha Thompson</i>	84
The Rain Sings to Me Tonight, <i>William R. Murphy</i>	85
Tete A Tete, <i>Frederick Francois</i>	86
Seethe: Jeffrey, <i>Sam Jacobsen</i>	87
Observation, <i>Jason S. Martin</i>	96
Old Woman of Mexico, <i>Tabatha Thompson</i>	103
 Fiction	
Delicate Swimmers, <i>Peter Rolufs</i>	7
The Death of a Philosopher: A One Act, <i>Phaedra Kelly</i>	16
Ezra's Story, <i>Wayne Self</i>	24
On The Death of Miss Johnson's Son, <i>Alan Rhodes</i>	36
Mo's Pros, <i>Jan Sweat</i>	48
The Beauty Pageant, <i>Peter Rolufs</i>	62
Zephyrs, <i>Madelyn Boudreaux</i>	68
Junkyard, <i>Gynger Ingram</i>	76
Self-Help with a Friend: A One Act, <i>Jason S. Martin</i>	89
From The Other Side of Suicide, <i>Brian Atkinson</i>	97
A Different Honor, <i>Randall Pleasant</i>	105
 Essays	
Utopia, <i>Herbert Meadors</i>	30
Loss, <i>H. Scott Jolley</i>	45
Give It A Whirl, <i>Liz Bonnette</i>	57
My Greatest Victory Over Fear, <i>Vera Dyess</i>	71
 Internal Illustrations	
<i>Carmen Martinez</i>	14, 28, 68, 81, 104
<i>Madelyn Boudreaux</i>	41, 44
<i>Jeanne Stallworth</i>	60
 Contributors' Notes	
	117

Evidence of Another Generation
Poems In Series

Goldie Lowenstein

May 16, 1968

"Hence today I believe that I
am acting in accordance with the will
of the Almighty Creator: by
defending myself against the Jew, I
am fighting for the work of the Lord."

Adolph Hitler

She holds me in her lap
like a child:
thirteen, a man,
long legs
down the side of her rocker,
red sneakers touching the floor
on point

She smooths my hair
with her grandmother touch:
The whispers of pain
she carries like the numbers on her forearm,
her secret under long-sleeves
in summer

The pain that is kept inside her;
that is her, as a child
with short, black-wavy hair
her mother tried to tame
with spit curls.

The summer she began to bleed
she knew she would,
all girls would.

My ear pressed against the cresent-moon scar
of her missing breast.

The breast my grandfather caressed
in his hand at night,
that nursed my mother.
The breast that is gone.
She sings

up to her ankles in black mud.

She felt cold,
and this was good;
it was good to remember that
she could feel.

on holding me even tighter.
i feel her breath rise and fall;
i smell her perfume : white shoulders
and potpourri from her dresser
wrapped in lace.

Listen to the names:

i am too big for her
but she insists
Miriam, Sara, Riva,
who dreamed for a prince
when there were no fairy tales
names
carried across the sky
by the breeze
in the words of smoke.

wait for Goldie
to finish:
You're old enough.

Prague : Small Beginnings

In Poland, the bear always danced;
the small heads of children
pressed between its great paws
like flowers along dark streets.

Our fathers
in black-coat prayers, the rhythm of a thousand ancient
camels,
sang of Jerusalem in circumcised voices,
reached for a nameless God, and stood in the ghetto
discussing weather, as if they were Poles.

The bear came in the skin of the German SS,
and we danced the long march of death.

Liberation

"We continue to uncover German concentration camps for political prisoners in which conditions of indescribable horrors prevail. I have visited one of these myself and I assure you that whatever has been printed on them to date has been understatement."

Dwight David Eisenhower

I.

I found a stuffed rabbit in the main house,
and I put it in the lap of a small girl;
her cellophane face pressed against the window,
with blank eyes staring at nothing.
It's an awfully long trip through eternity.

II.

I took pictures,
so I wouldn't forget.
When I look at the pictures,
I remember the stench most of all.

III.

In the crematoria of Buchenwald,
there were piles of small black bones-
with names and numbers written on them.
An inmate pulled a box from the pile;
he said it was his wife.

William Keith

His Last Scream Before Pain

and we were hurtling
through dawn's grey
on some stretch of greyer asphalt
-highway to so much death.
a million miles,
we travelled the speed of sound-
to purge me of something tiny, unwanted.
then the glass shattered,
stung my eyes,
bled me dry of all emotion.
but in that moment
I saw
 that he had
 your hair,
 your mouth,
 your piercing black eyes
and my voice echoing
 his last scream before pain.

Madelyn Boudreaux

**April..., In the Year of Lord,
Nineteen Hundred and Eighty Eight**

i went home
easter family gathering
reflection of past extravaganzas
granny's gone

camus, my damn car
break down twelve thousand three
next to ea's
i haven't seen ea in two years

ea won't see me, the daughter relates
maya says it's cancer

ea, with the years stripped away
is maya
maya, with her austere inner beauty
ea's legacy

i hear yowling from the back of the house
siamese cat, eighteen years old
shakily lifts its head
ea, i have seen you

William R. Murphy

Delicate Swimmers

Peter Rolufs

On October 9, 1988, at 3:25 p.m., in a crowded shopping mall corridor, a silver helium balloon expanded into existence in the hands of a clown. It was given to Camille, a grown woman who had no children, just her own wrist, around which she tied the balloon's ribbon. The clown recognized Camille. He had just put a balloon into the same tiny hands that arranged most of the flowers he delivered for a local florist. He watched her hair cover her face as she tied the bow so deftly, so beautifully, and with such effortlessness. He could only imagine where her intent expression of concentration really focused its energy. At first, he thought he would say, "Camille? Dmitri. Remember me?" But he didn't.

Instead, he waited until he could stand the regret no longer and went searching for her all over the mall which he personally had filled with helium balloons. He nearly caught up with her at the perfume counter of Hildegarde's Department Store, but she was destined to vanish just before he would get there.

The balloon tugged skyward while Camille spoke with the girl behind the counter and sampled a mixture of new and standard scents. Among them, she found her favorite -- "La Poison." Its bottle was the same as pictured in the magazine ad. It showed a woman dressed in fine cloth standing at the bow of an ancient Greek sailing ship. There were wind and mist and endless stretches of Hellenic beaches. There was no man in the picture. Camille rubbed the card and breathed in. The woman was waiting for him. She was probably Helen of Troy or Athena, the goddess.

Camille wore this perfume all the time. She would wear it today to the Aquarium Shop, which had the biggest tank in the world. A diver swam around in the tank and waved to her from inside when she visited. His name was Robert. He spoke with her about exotic fish and the time he searched for sunken treasure. Today, Camille would buy a pretty fish from him. She would ask about the North Pole

or the spanish merchant vessel, and he would remember the subtle "La Poison." She put some of the sample on her wrist and brought her wrist to her nose.

"Poisson," she pronounced dreamily and breathed in again. "I think they're making it less concentrated," she said to the girl behind the counter.

"You're only getting used to it," explained the girl understandingly. A clown was moving about in the lingerie department.

The clown, Dmitri, was losing hope. "How foolish I am!" he thought. Amid the lace and soft whites and pinks he considered his whole life -- a litany of hesitations. Dmitri's peripheral vision began to fail him in his despair. Camille was standing only yards away, wondering about the problem of not being able to smell one's personal self while the salesgirl explained the danger of putting on too much perfume. But when Dmitri stepped into the aisle and looked in the direction of the perfume counter, Camille was gone.

Alternating several perfumes denies a person a "signature scent" and causes the ambiguities of mingled aromas in clothing, car, and household. "La Poison" was Camille's signature scent. No other perfume would remind her of Helen waiting for Odysseus or Mr. Robert of lovely Camille. Camille stopped by her house for lunch and freshening.

The silver helium balloon went along nicely with the pretty things in Camille's house. She released it in her living room where with its small force it pressed against the ceiling and bobbed in her turbulent wake. While Camille had her lunch in the kitchen, the pink bears printed on the balloon's mirror surface navigated around the living room in search of a means of escape. In the meantime, they spread a message of "love" to the living room objects and a host of neatly aranged knick-knacks. In a region of calm, the balloon paused above an empty fish tank.

The tank was new. It had real coral and a little treasure chest. Behind the treasure chest, in a corner of the tank, stood an aerator in the shape of a deep-sea diver wearing an old-fashioned pressure suit. Mr. Robert had installed the tank himself. Camille would have given

him a sandwich or some leftover pasta for the favor, but he had a layer of fat which made him look content.

Camille forgot her cereal while she observed her empty tank from the kitchen table. She thought of choosing fish at the aquarium shop. There were so many fish! How would she ever choose one? The colorful objects weaved and turned through her imagination. Amid thousands of little swimmers there was a dolphin... or an octopus... or Poseidon surrounded by swirling diamonds. Camille pulled her gaze away from the fish tank and went to the bathroom for a vigorous teeth-brushing and a final beauty check. The balloon, alone in the living room, strained upward, concentrating its passions on the ultimate spheres, longing to join them.

In the mirror, Camille watched her face contort wildly while she brushed. Wide eyes peered into the glass to absorb and cherish images of herself: the sweet, pretty lady with the pretty fish... the beautiful, loving wife with the food she prepared... the pretty house with places to sit down and chat. Camille applied her lipstick.

Robert happened to be in the tank servicing it with a special vacuum cleaner when Camille walked into the aquarium shop. He knew Camille by her last name, Mumford, quite possibly Miss Mumford, the graceful, attractive woman who by now knew quite a lot about exotic fish and under-water search techniques. His greeting gesture received a smile that was enough for him to dwell upon as Camille moved over to a small tank to study the peculiarly motionless creatures inside. The bright, solid yellow fish were new at the Aquarium Shop. The sign on the tank said, "DO NOT TAP ON GLASS." Camille leaned close to admire their brilliance.

Robert watched her while he vacuumed, thinking of what he would say to her when he surfaced. A yellow tang would be a fine fish for the gentle Miss Mumford. She learned so quickly about the various species. She would understand the special care that such an easily frightened fish requires. It was natural that Miss Mumford should take immediate interest in the delicate but resplendent yellow tang. Robert enjoyed his moment watching her unnoticed. He watched her small, graceful hand move up

to the glass. The easily frightened fish were startled by the sudden tap and darted about frantically.

Robert surfaced. "Miss Mumford," he spoke from the top of the giant tank.

"Hi!" Camille had no idea.

"They're easily frightened," Robert apologized.

"Oh! Is that why... Oh!" Robert looked like a frog in his wet suit and flippers.

"They were so beautiful you didn't notice the sign."

Camille looked back at the tank and saw the big sign with bold letters. Camille was embarrassed.

"I hope I didn't hurt them."

"Don't worry." Robert reassured her. Camille peered into the little tank.

"They're gorgeous!" Truly, the bright yellow intensified when the fish were startled, but even when they were motionless, frozen in fear, they were wonderful to behold. "Are they expensive?" Camille asked. Robert knew the yellow tang was the perfect fish for Camille and told her a discounted price. He dried off and went to the floor to begin the painstaking process of extracting a yellow tang without scaring it to death.

"A sudden movement could give one of these a heart attack." Robert whispered as he lowered a special container over Camille's chosen fish. "That is why the insides of most fish tanks are mirrored or covered with something that only allows viewing from the outside."

Camille thought of her yellow tang alone in its tank with only its reflection for company. "If I got a male and a female, would they have children?"

"No," said Robert. "These fish are bred for their beauty just like flowers. The prettiest fish happen to be the most easily frightened and now they're too scared of one another to mate. It's done artificially."

Camille's yellow tang began to detect subtle changes in its environment but before it could panic it fell into a stupor caused by the drug that Robert dissolved in its water. The short trip to Camille's house passed unnoticed. It gradually awoke in view of its reflection, a familiar sight which allowed the fish to get used to its new environment as the drug wore off.

Camille changed out of her clothes and into the worn leotards she wore around the house. She rummaged through a box of junk and found some plastic Christmas holly which she draped over her bodice and admired in the closet mirror. "Poisson," she said, smelling her wrist. The woman in the mirror was very beautiful and would get married some day and have children.

In the living room, the balloon, daunted by the unmoving ceiling, converted its passion into a single charge of rage and exploded above the fish tank. Its withered remains descended onto the water, disturbing adrenalin-like chemicals in the yellow tang's body that caused its tiny heart to pump too fast, setting the little valves out of sync. Camille phoned up the Aquarium Shop as soon as she saw her fish twitching in its cardiac struggle.

"Mr. Robert, my fish is dying," said Camille.

"Oh, Miss Mumford!" Robert was sorry. "Are you by your tank?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Take the fish in your hands out of the water and keep it right side up."

Camille pressed the phone against her shoulder with her face and lifted the fish out of the water. "O.K." she said.

"Press your thumbs lightly behind its gills and rub with even strokes once a second."

"I'm rubbing," said Camille.

"When it stops twitching, put it back in the water." Robert listened for an update and heard Camille sob.

"It won't stop twitching," Camille cried.

"It's O.K., Miss Mumford. Yellow tangs get scared too easily. You probably got a bad one. Just keep rubbing until it stops and put it back in the water."

Camille's fish eventually stopped twitching and expired in her hands. The technique didn't work every time. Robert found about the balloon's involvement in the fish's demise and was happy to give Camille a free replacement fish. Camille named the deceased "Dmitri," put him in a cigar box, and performed a burial service the next morning in her garden.

Don't Let Me... Think

Watch me now.
Don't let me swim too far.
Out into these indigo waters
That may engulf me or
Could they glide on by?

If I didn't stop to think
And ignore the waves
Know only the rhythm
Unheeding of the warring forces
The stifling oppression will vanish.

Watch me now--
I'm over my head.

Holly Cope

An Ocean of Blue

an ocean of blue
in that lake of champagne
somewhere between
the bridge & the pier
it began to rain
the waves were white-capping
but against the wind
and the ship turned
on its side
and emptied itself
of human
sin

Shari Scaife

In Anita's Eyes

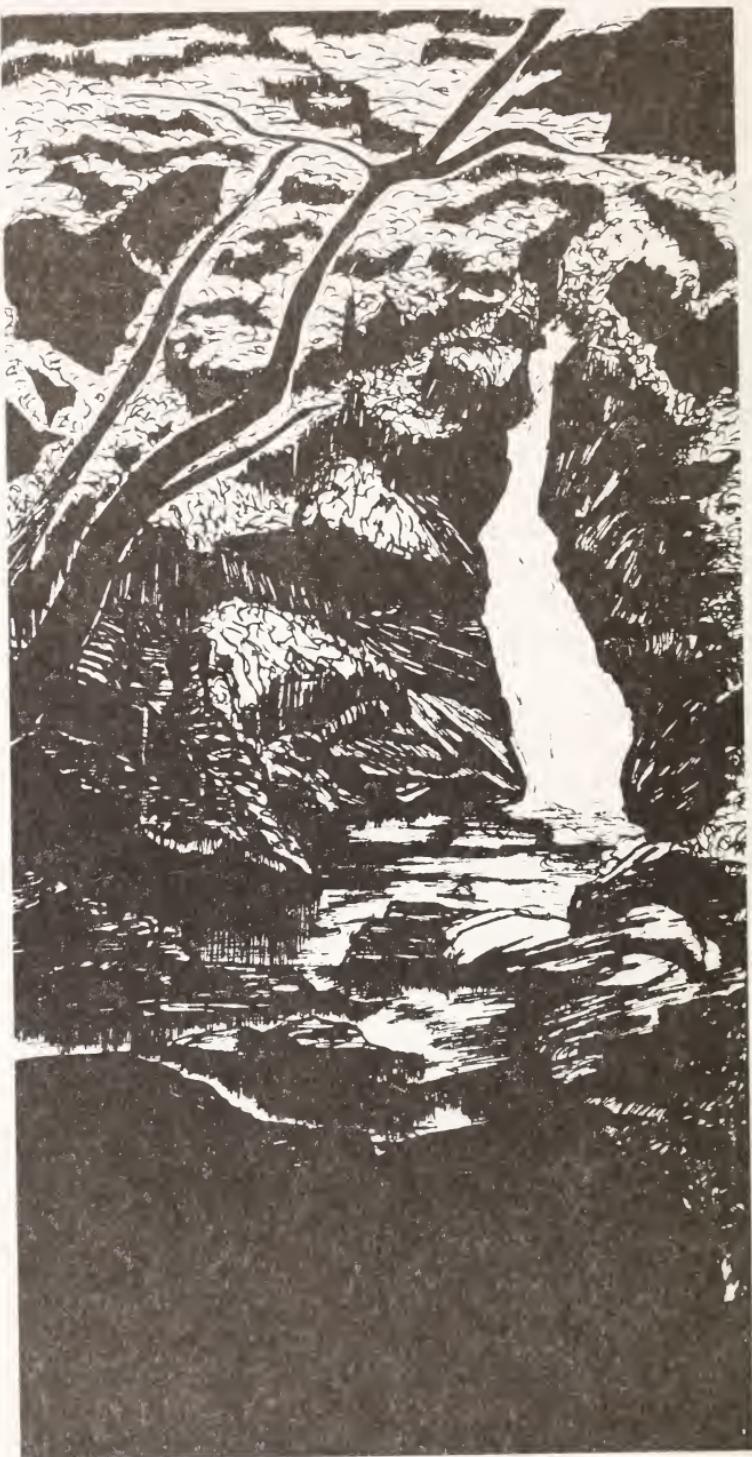
In Anita's eyes I see the pain
She tries so hard to hide.
I asked her once about her tears
But was sure that she had lied.
She swept away my curious thoughts
With her careless, childlike grin.
But like a child, I could tell,
Her wall of security was wearing thin.

I saw a family portrait once--
A photo of loving arms.
But in Anita's eyes I saw the pain.
To me it seemed so strong.
She stood behind her family,
In the shadow of their limelight.
Her eyes were dark and swollen
From the tears she'd cried at night.

In such a happy world she stood
With a naive, contented face.
Yet in Anita's eyes I found
A door to a smaller, secret place.
An empty world of sorrow,
A darker world of tears.
A private world concealed
Within herself for years.

Inside the woman I see the child;
Beyond the toughness I find the girl.
Behind the obvious I see the deep;
And beneath the shell I've found the pearl.
On cold and lonely nights
In places far away,
I sometimes find my reflection
Within Anita's eyes.

Meghan Carpenter



Louisiana Rain

The grey tin roof sounded the arrival of your birth.
Like Gram's heartbeat, the patter of the roof and the rain soothed your whimpers.

Now, beads of rain bounce off our black tar roof.
You drum your knuckles on the table as the rain faintly mumbles at the window.

Tap, Daddy, tap.

Michelle Gremillion

The Death of a Philosopher: A One Act

Phaedra Kelly

list of characters:

Professor
Clyde Warren
God
several students

Setting: a college classroom; There are a few bored looking students sitting in some dilapidated desks, whispering among themselves. The professor, a man with a long beard and sandals (he looks vaguely like Moses), is pacing back and forth as he discusses St. Anselm's proofs for the existence of God. Clyde Warren is sitting in the vey back of the classroon, a little apart from the rest. He is the only one who is really paying attention to what the professor is saying.

Professor: So, as you see, Anselm affirmed that God is "that which nothing greater can be thought." Therefore--

Warren: (interrupting): Nietzsche didn't believe in God.

Professor: What was that, Mr. Warren?

Warren: Nietzsche didn't believe in God.

Professor: (a little confused, as if wondering what this has to do with Anselm): Yes, that's right.

Warren: In fact, Nietzsche thought that Christianity was the most damaging thing to ever happen to mankind.

Professor: Yes, but what has this to do with Anselm's proof for the existence of God?

Warren: Well, I just don't see why se should have to study medieval philosophy at all, when Nietzsche thought that it was worthless.

(At this time a young woman of about twenty years appears at the edge of the stage. She is wearing cut-offs and is a bit overweight. No one seems to notice that she's there. She, by the way, is God.)

Professor: Look, to have any kind of understanding of modern philosophy, including Nietzsche, one *has* to study the medieval philosophers. When we get to Nietzsche, then we can discuss his opinions of Christianity.

Warren: I have a little trouble with what you just said. I mean, I haven't studied medieval philosophy, yet I perfectly understand Nietzsche. I think you're just wasting the class' time by studying this garbage.

God: Now wait a moment!

(Suddenly, as the professor opens his mouth to tell Warren to get the hell out of his class, he and the other students freeze. Warren looks around in astonishment. The girl walks into the classroom and stops behind Warren's desk. He does not see her.)

Warren: Hey, what's going on?

God: Hello, Clyde, nice day, isn't it?

Warren, (with a start): Who are you?

God: I'm God.

Warren: (laughing nervously): No, really, who are you?

God: I told you already, I'm God. You're the philosopher, you should be able to tell.

Warren: How?

God: Because I stopped time, of course. Who else could stop time except God?

Warren: Look, you can't possibly be God, God's a male.

God: You know, for someone who thinks he's so brilliant, you're sure stupid. Do you think you can put a gender on God? I can be anyone or anything I please. I could be a twelve-foot goat with purple horns, if I wanted to be. Anyway, if you had any sense, instead of worrying over trivialities, you'd be asking me why I, God, chose to visit you.

Warren: Well, not that I believe that you're really God or anything, but why *are* you here?

God: Because, Clyde, I really hate to tell you this, but you're the AntiChrist.

Warren: What! That's ridiculous! How could I be the AntiChrist?

God: Hey, I'm God. I know these things.

Warren: Look, you're not God, and I'm not the AntiChrist. There is no such thing as God or the AntiChrist. Nietzsche said so, and I believe him.

God: Oh that Nietzsche! He was something, all right. Crazy as a loon. I sure felt sorry for that guy. He led an awful life.

Warren: You're the one who's crazy as a loon!

God: And I suppose that you're pretty sane, sitting here arguing with God? But I guess that's just the sort of thing you'd expect from the AntiChrist.

Warren: Okay, prove to me that I'm the AntiChrist.

God: Why should I have to prove anything to you? I'm God. You're the AntiChrist because you're the most obnoxious creature to ever walk on the face of the earth.

Warren: What has obnoxiousness got to do with anything? If I was the AntiChrist, wouldn't I be out

slaughtering and raping and plundering and stuff like that?

God: Oh no. Lots of humans do that; it's part of their nature. No, the trait that the AntiChrist carries is obnoxiousness. Obnoxiousness is the biggest sin against God; it's perverse. I can't stand it. It makes me angrier than anything else in the whole universe. That's the AntiChrist's purpose, you know, to make me angry. And you've done a fine job of it, by the way.

Warren: Look, this is getting ridiculous. I'm sick of trying to argue with you.

God: I'm going to give you a chance, though. If you will admit that I exist, I'll let you be. If not, I'll have to destroy you.

Warren, (Backing away nervously): What are you, some kind of psycho? Get away from me or I'll call a cop and have you put away.

God: Tell me that I exist, and I'll go away.

Warren: All right, all right, you're God! You exist! Now will you please leave?

God: You don't really believe that I exist; you're just saying that so I'll go away.

Warren: How do you expect me to believe that you're God and therefore that you exist, unless you give me some kind of proof? I mean, where's the burning bush? Part a sea for me, then I'll believe.

God: I stopped time: isn't that enough?

Warren: (pointing to the others, who are still motionless): They're just pretending: they're playing a trick on me. But it won't work, I tell you, it won't work. Unless you give me proof, I refuse to believe in you.

God: I can't do that. Don't you see, if I prove to you that I exist, then it requires nothing for you to believe in me. You'll believe that I exist like you believe that trees and cars and people exist. You must believe in me through faith. It's the only way.

Warren: Why should I have faith in something that doesn't exist? In something that can't even prove to me that it exists. I don't believe you're God, I don't believe that there is a God.

God: All right, if that's the way you want it.

Warren: Will you go away now?

God: (sighs): Yes, I'll go away now. Goodbye, Clyde. Maybe by the next time around, you'll have learned something. (Exits.)

(Except for the others, who remain motionless, Warren is alone. He looks around nervously, but then realizes that he's been proven right.)

Warren: Okay guys, enough's enough. The joke's over.

(No one moves.)

Warren: C'mon guys, get serious.

(Still no one moves. Warren, who, despite his bravado, is truly frightened, runs out of the classroom, exiting stage right. He runs behind the stage and re-enters on stage left, outside the classroom.)

Warren: Nietzsche can't be wrong. There's no God. They're just trying to scare me. But I'll show them. They can't frighten me into believing. THERE IS NO GOD!!!! (screamed at the top of his lungs)

There is a pause, and then an enormously huge foot (made, perhaps of papermache) falls on top of him. He falls, of course, instantly killed. The class resumes. No one notices that he has disappeared. The curtain falls.

Judging

I walked down the street and saw three people serving the Lord.

The first served the Lord with song--

And the Lord smiled.

I did not like his voice.

The second served the Lord with words--

Again the Lord smiled.

I had a problem with his method of speech.

The third served the Lord with actions--

The Lord smiled.

I thought his actions were too drastic.

Then the Lord looked down on me and said,

"Just how do you serve me?"

I thought for awhile and smiled

when I came up with an answer

I knew the Lord would like.

I said, "I serve You in prayer."

Then the Lord looked down and said,

"I never heard you.

Besides, I do not like your voice

and your words are too drastic."

Thomas A. Zimmerman

Crowded At The Top

The reporters tell us the Japanese
are running out of space.
They've moved skyward, living in
tall, narrow buildings,
gardens on rooftops.

The statisticians explain,
"The problem is global."
They provide a graph
seen only as a paper truth,
like a Tarot card predicting
death years ago.

The Japanese man bends slightly
as he ascends into his coiled home.
Dreaming his unborn child will
be a dancer, he looks around
and realizes he has not enough room
to twirl around
with flailing arms.

Michelle Gremillion

Anxiety Itches

Anxiety itches
Like the bugbites chigging up my legs

Sticky, tiny prickles
Weaving,multiplying,seething

As dread infests
Like the vermin fleshing upward

Fester my unease
Until I scratch my skin to shreds

Seeking only to soothe
The troubled nerves within.

Noel A. Ponthieux

Ezra's Story

Wayne Self

I always felt uncomfortable when I visited them--like an outsider. Oh, they were friendly enough; I could tell they liked me, but they seemed so close to one another that I felt like a relative stranger. Though none of us ever mentioned it, I know that I was invited only into their circle of sometime friends and obscure acquaintances. I was a friend, yes, but I was not allowed to join them in their strange and special bond. To invite myself would have been a gross intrusion.

We were sitting around as we did every Sunday night in the half of a duplex that they called home. It was a decent place, I suppose, neatly structured and decorated with half-finished paintings. We all considered it a study in necessity, almost completely barren of such luxuries as furniture. We talked and drank and smoked cigarettes that Dali always provided. Dali (his real name was Robert) was an usher at the dollar cinema and an aspiring painter. Tall and quiet, Dali always seemed out of character, as his silence was in no way an attempt to retreat or to be invisible; on the contrary, he was imposing in his quietness, like a mystery that just won't be resolved.

Ezra was a writer. This, too, was a nickname, but I can't recall his real name. I don't suppose I ever knew it. He was always casual, easy, and talkative, with the kind of friendly energy that made his every word interesting. He always sat in the same chair, a big-backed wicker seat, very pretty and even more uncomfortable, and always wore a big blue housecoat.

I myself was a graduate student in literature at a state university whose name isn't important. I considered myself a disciplined student and I didn't get out very often. That's why these Sunday excursions were so important, as they constituted the near-entirety of my social life.

And we sat and we talked, the three of us, about the standard intellectual subjects: politics, music, Eliot, art. It was a constant, lively conversation that moved easily from one subject to another without a lull. But, finally, in

the wee hours of the morning, the conversation faltered and died into silence.

Ezra was at the window, gazing at his half-reflection and slowly tapping his fingers on the windowsill. Dali watched him, knowingly, expectantly, as if the two of them were communicating wordlessly. And I, I looked around nervously, hoping something would catch my attention and suppress my anxious curiosity. What was going on?

"And in the middle of the crowd, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall... of the true, wise friend...."

Thus Ezra began a tale that affected me deeply and, until now, has been shared by only the three of us. I wrote as he talked, being adept at shorthand, and now I shall share the story with you. I ask only your mind and your sympathy, for this is a story near untold.

Do you remember being young: You may say you're young, now, but you are wrong. I don't mean the youth of body or mind. I mean the youth of spirit. Remember the wonder in every new sight, sound, smell? Remember truly happy happiness, sad sadness, before even emotions were dulled by growing up?

I was nine years old and the most important thing in the world to me was my stick. It was about three feet long and gnarled and knotted. It was my gun, my sword, my spear, my snake, my friend. I kept it in my closet and no one touched it but me.

You smile. I suppose the phallic imagery is amusing to you. But your smile reveals your age. Remember, I speak of childhood, when a simple stick could be any number of things, limited only by imagination. Now a stick isn't even a stick, is it? Try, please, to muster enough innocence to understand, or my story is useless.

My best friend lived across the field from me in a small, well-shaded house. This was an open time, when divisions between people were only geographical. He was my closest friend because he lived closest to me. I don't remember his name.

We spent long, fast-paced days in the orange grove out back, intoxicated by the sweet-smelling trees, pretending,

as all kids do. I don't remember all our childish fantasies--I suppose age blurs the unessential--but I remember looking forward to every sweet summer day between the trees.

My father was kind, I guess, as kind as a wealthy man can be and still retain his wealth. He didn't go to church, but always tithed. He owned the orange grove where we played, along with other orange groves all over the county. He wasn't a very active man; his health required that he stay inside, away from the infamous Georgia pollen. I was surprised of course, when I came home to see him in the yard, yelling at some scruffy-looking bearded man.

I entered the yard slowly and crouched behind the car. They were yelling about things I really didn't understand. The man was cursing and threatening my dad, and Dad had his Winchester gripped in one white-knuckled hand. I was scared as only a child can be. It's not easy, you see, to come home from a day of pretended heroism and fearlessness and walk right into reality, right into powerlessness. It was as if the world had decided to show me how much of it was beyond my control. There was nothing I could do. I didn't even have the vocabulary to curse my weaknesses.

It was only a matter of time before Daddy started coughing and wheezing. He doubled over and grabbed his stomach with his free arm. The rifle fell from his hand and dropped to the ground. Dad stumbled inside, still coughing.

The man panicked for a moment, seeming completely confused. Then he got in his car and sped away.

I ran. I ran hard and fast and didn't look back. I was running--not from the man, no, he was no longer a danger--but from helplessness, hopelessness, and fear. I ran 'til I reached the only safe place I knew. Then, finally, out-of-breath, I collapsed by an orange tree.

I was safe here, leaning against the strong, unshakable trunk. Here, I could close my eyes and daydream like a hero.

Here, I could step out, proud and confident like a hero. I could stand between them and send Daddy inside

and make the bad man leave. Here, among the trees, I had a say in things.

I got home just before sunset. Daddy was in bed and the doctor was there. I went to my room and cried.

Children have slow memories and resilient personalities. Each day is a new beginning. When I woke up the next morning, yesterday was over and pointless and had no effect on today. I grabbed my stick and began the pretty morning walk to the orange grove.

My friend was there, sitting on a stump, head in hands, drawing in the dirt with his foot. His long, black hair hid his face.

He spoke without looking up. "Your daddy and my daddy fought last night."

Realization hit hard. I'd never met my friend's father.

"Your daddy fired my daddy," he said, still staring at the ground. "He accused my daddy of stealin', but my daddy don't steal." Finally he looked up, looked at my eyes.

"Your daddy's nothing but a rich bastard." He came at me, arms flailing. What happened next has been erased by Providence and time."

Ezra had crossed the room and was watching a candle burn in a rounded green holder. I started to speak, but a gesture from Dali silenced me. Ezra's gaze lifted to the ceiling as he continued.

"There were ambulances that day, and police. But that's all a blur of sirens and flashing lights. I didn't get in trouble; my father was too important for that. I believe it's on that day that I began to understand. The long daydream called childhood ended. Suddenly I knew more that I wanted to know, about the world, about people. About myself. I guess that was the day I lost my childhood. Maybe, if I keep trying, I'll one day get it back."

Tired, eyes closed, his story ended, Ezra leaned his head back as if he were praying.

I left at sunrise, finally understanding their communion and why I had no place in it. Theirs was the bond of joint futility, a desparate clinging in the face of an

all-to-real reality. They were creators of fantasy, adults screaming for youth. They shared the world of daydreams. How painless. How pitiful. How heroic.



DW 12651

Ascent to Verdure

don't you know
that even the scent of moist earth
has such depth--
it stifles me?
can't you inhale youthful images
of decay?
like cinnamon bark
and bite of ginger
life highly prized
for brief sweetness
and lingering bitter
aftertaste.
the best you can hope for,
a mark of recognition,
significance,
existence,
is a footprint
in the muck.
if we, mankind, regress
as experts say,
then stamp that print firmly
into the moist earth;
be my revenge against its depth and longevity.
prehistoric ancestors could ask
no better reward,
for they could appreciate
no other.

Sam Jacobsen

Utopia

Herbert Meadors

Yesterday I watched as two grown men fought for hours over who owned a certain spot of land. I guess it would have been a worthwhile fight except that the land was about as long and as wide as the shaggy rug in the bathroom.

I began to think of the greed which exists in this society of ours, and how money basically rules men's souls; then I remembered Hickie Morgan owes me fifty bucks.

Were the early extremists really off the mark when they ravished the thought of a utopia? Were they just social outcasts who finally realized they couldn't keep up with the Jonses, thus declaring society material-minded? Maybe the utopia leaders were tired of their mothers-in-law.

Often I think of how a perfect society would be if I were the leader. I imagined a place without corruption; a place without flaky politicians, a place without Geraldo. I imagined life without people like John Filmore. Last month, John tried to commit suicide in McDonald's by jumping off one of the park slides. When onlookers ignored him, thinking he was a publicity stunt by the company, he jumped off and said, "Oh, well." John was just not the ideal person to leave the family dog with while you're on vacation.

Indeed, our country is not a utopia, but what country is? In Russia, you wait ten years before the plumber fixes your pipes. In America, it takes ten years to pay off the plumber. In Russia, citizens worry about the media not reporting enough of the news. In America, citizens worry about their private stories (like the time you were ten, and you wet your pants in Sunday school) being put on the front pages of the New York Times.

I imagined a society that was smart enough not to spend two hundred dollars on a toilet seat; it's better to have flood lights and an ejection button.

In my perfect society, I guess I wouldn't have a military. In case of war, I would just parachute over a million Richard Simmons impersonators to confuse the

enemy. That would surely take care of defense spending--how much can a million leotards cost?

I guess the major export of my utopia would be sunglasses. Since the ozone layer is disappearing bit by bit, I figure people should at least protect their eyes while they're being microwaved.

In this perfect society, we'll be quite careful about who we allow into our happy little family. No drug-pushers, no rapists, and no little old ladies selling Avon. When the leaders of other nations visit my utopia, I'll make them stay in shabby hotels with rings in the toilets and terrible television reception.

Capital punishment in my utopia would consist of light offenders collecting garbage for the city, while murderers and revolutionaries must watch endless hours of public broadcast programs.

I guess when you think about it, there never will be a utopia. There will always be the two grown men fighting over the block of land, and the John Filmores causing trouble at McDonald's. Our job is to somehow live with these people in harmony, and possibly report their actions to the media if we can.

Anathema

i often wonder
why pessimists are marked
as human.
for if i steeped in teacups
full of shattered dreams,
twirled their contents 'round
with no predictions of a better future,
painted my world with rainbows of grey,
i would not be human,
merely man,
for all men disdain pursual of lost causes.
we can save whales of woodlands;
save this, save that,
but do not save ourselves.

Sam Jacobsen

Haiku Quartet

Thunder's angry voice,
The full fury of Lightning,
The cold shards of Rain.

Uprooted old oak
From the ancient soil, strong winds
Don't discriminate.

We walk in sunlight.
Sparrows sing as we weave our
Quiet conversation.

Cornflower blue eyes,
Wheat gold hair, ivory skin,
Nature's true beauty.

Jason S. Martin

"7:07 a.m., 37 degrees"

stoplights'
electric hum-
technology audible
in silence
snowbank-deep.

parked cars-
empty shells
giving man
places-to-go-things-to-do
direction.
cheap vinyl
coding relevance
on flabby thighs,
and velour:
motherly, soft,
self-important,
allows false
comfort and security.

24-hour-teller -
ever the friendly,
smiling
sneering
hostess
reminds us
of our forgetfulness
and impatience;
a glittery-golden
stigma
that dreams are made of
tells us
what we need to know-
7:07 a.m.,
37 degrees.

Sam Jacobsen

Spectator

Down at Paw-Paw's barn,
Glen and Tammy and I;
You were there also,
Staring from your octagonal home
In the corner of the hayloft.
The morning dew, introduced through
A Hole in the Roof, still glimmering
On the strands of your Industry.

The squeals of delighted children
Did not disturb you as they climbed the ladder,
And sat upon the bales, foolishly lighting
Their cigarettes; threatening their lives
And your domain.
Luck, Fate, and the Lord Above watched over,
And all was safe.

The fly still twitching in the corner of
Your home/trap
A careless aviator soon to be a lifeless lunch.
You started as the children noticed you,
Aweing at your red hour-glassed belly.
Then running humble-tumble to the window,
And leaping to the soft hay and warm mud below.
They provide a joyful distraction and
An occasion to smile that arachnida smile.

Jason S. Martin

On The Death of Miss Johnson's Son

Alan Rhodes

For the sorrowful story that I am about to relate to you, I must beg your forgiveness. However, for those involved, I solicit no pardon. It is only because of a deep commitment to the truth and the defense of any truth, regardless of whom it incriminates or exonerates, that I pause now to finally relieve my conscience concerning this unfortunate incident. In the name of fair play, I will make all possible conscious efforts to remain unbiased as I present, or try to present the facts as I now recall them. Any concerns I may have had for the reputations of the parties involved are probably unnecessary now anyway, since they are all either removed, deceased, or just don't care about the speculations of a young child colored by years of private and often lonely reflection. By subtracting my approximate age at the time from my present age, and considering that I was very young when the tragedy surprised us, I calculate that at least thirty years have passed since the untimely death of my young companion. So perhaps I have dwelled upon this event in the history of my family too long. And perhaps now is the time to tell the whole truth about the night Miss Johnson's son was killed.

First, it is preferable that I acquaint you with the circumstances surrounding Miss Johnson and her situation of homelessness. However, I was very young when she and her son appeared, and my recollection does not supply me with the details of our first meeting. Mamma had told all us children that it would take some time for our new tenants to adjust to a new life and that we should be as kind and considerate of their predicament as we could. Daddy said only that Miss Johnson had "been through a lot in her life" and we should always respect the wisdom of her years and travel. Well, even at that tender age, I had developed my own criteria for choosing my friends: friendliness, unselfishness, and the ability to return mutual respect being at the top of the list. While Miss Johnson could never quite gain my total trust (and

probably never tried to), her son was a lifetime friend from first sight.

Although I never knew his real name, my daddy always called the younger visitor "Slinky." This name was never confirmed nor denied by Miss Johnson, but come to think about it, neither was her name. These matters were of little concern at the time and are not much more important now, except that they do illustrate our acceptance of my father's word without question. Anyway, Slinky and I were the best of friends. We spent many long summer days in the woods near our home. We would play until exhaustion dictated a rest, and then, at either my suggestion or his, we would stretch out by the creek and daydream in the coolness of the breezy summer afternoons. Sometimes, one or more of my brothers accompanied us, but this never reduced our fun. There was, however, some competition between my brothers and me for the supreme position of "best friends with Slinky," a competition that Slinky seemed to detach himself from. He was very laid-back.

On rare occasions, Miss Johnson accompanied us on our adventures; more out of jealousy, I think, than a genuine interest in the excursions. She would always remain out in front of the pack and, except when we stopped, she paid very little attention to me, my brothers, or her son. But during our rest stops, after an apparent period of indecision, she would join the rest of us. Then she would exhibit the oddest display of over-protectiveness and sudden affection for her son. I could never quite understand nor explain her behavior. And when I described these and other instances of peculiar conduct by her to my parents, they dismissed my fear that it was "something personal" by saying that Slinky and Miss Johnson only had one another. I accepted this explanation, and even understood it to an extent, and tried my best to be civil to Miss Johnson, out of my love for her son, I suppose. We truly were as close as two brothers could get, and I now know that Slinky held an equal affection for me.

Try as I did, though, I could never get very close to Miss Johnson, at least not as close as the rest of the family. I was always puzzled and perhaps suspicious of her unexplained past. When I asked my Mamma and Daddy,

I got back an even more puzzling account than my imagination had provided. Daddy continued his defense of her by insisting that the pair was alone in the world, and he never attempted to disguise his affection for her or for both of them. Mother was more indifferent but, as usual, she supported my father's opinion. And she often declared that Miss Johnson was a great help to her around the house, although I could never see how, except that she did help with the chickens at feeding time and provided some company for Mamma when we were at school.

So I resigned to the task of being a mentor to the younger Slinky and abandoned any hope I had entertained of becoming close to his mother. I was constantly aware of her resentment of my actions, but persisted in my endeavor to win Slinky's trust and approval. At length we reached a level of total confidence that surpassed any degree of veracity that I could describe with mere words. It was as if we were mentally linked--as if we could and did read each other's minds. We had developed a true friendship. No doubt our relationship would have lasted for many, many years had it not been for that fateful night; that horrible Halloween night when my young companion was taken away from me as suddenly as he had appeared maybe one and a half or two years earlier.

After we had prepared ourselves for our annual trek of "trick-or-treating," a short argument ensued over whether or not to allow Slinky to join us. Slinky had never been trick-or-treating. I could not understand why the debate could even merit discussion. Of course he should go. It had already been decided that, because of the homes in that rural community were so sparsely scattered, Miss Johnson would accompany my four brothers and me to ensure our safety. So, as usual, I argued my buddy's case with my parents. My brother and Miss Johnson waited impatiently at the end of the long drive leading to our house. I shudder as I recall the next events. I had angered my dear mother and, were it not for my dedication to defending Slinky, would have dropped the matter. If I had only turned and left right then.

As my mother and I continued to debate (I was at this point begging), Miss Johnson returned to the front porch

and, unannounced to us, retrieved her son. At this point, my dad settled the dispute with a stern look through the porch light at me. The next thing of significance I can remember was the terrible screeching of automobile tires. Daddy said that Slinky never saw the car. Later he supposed that perhaps he had been blinded by the headlights. The lady driving the vehicle was hysterical at first, and later mournfully explained that she rounded the curve and "there he was" (It was a quarter of a mile to the nearest curve). I experienced a torrent of emotions ranging from fear and sorrow to regret and remorse, but mostly I felt anger. I had lost the best childhood friend I ever had to a terrible *accident*--and the world, the world had lost the finest mixed-breed hound puppy it will ever see.

We buried poor Slinky out behind the house the next morning and, as you may imagine, it was a sad ceremony. It was my first close look at death and the cold reality of losing a loved one. I remained at the grave after the rest of the family had left. In these few moments, I tried to compile the wild thoughts of the eighteen hours since the car had struck my friend, and to understand my own feelings. I wanted to blame someone, exonerate myself. I knew then I must "carry on," but it would be many years before I could totally accept the loss of my young friend. I would live with his death, but I would never forget his life.

How Many Insects Must Die In Order For Me to Make This Trip Into Town?

baptist church neon glow flo signs spinning--
flashing, "this is America."

o Kerouac

is this really all that's left of what was
to be freedom
to be beat was it not to be free ?
realization of how right you were.

o, great guru of the west
left with the lot of we
the incompetent children--
yours.

I wait for my awakening.

Tabatha Thompson

Gypsy Child

Gypsy child
They say you're wild
In your yellow and aquamarine.
Sailing to
Blazing oceans blue
And playing in fields of green.

Young and wise
Your days rush by
In a flash of laughter and love.
Gypsy child
They'll say you're wild
And wonder what you're made of.

Holly Cope



The Death of Sensuality

miss. (i wouldn't
be like you) a face
hard to smash glass
razored cheeks and
chiselled nose
sharp accents of your
precision, surgical
make-over of "haute couture"
trades in yesterday's
soft, warm femininity
for the hard edged, cubed
feel of concrete, glass
and steel.
a true reflection of modernism, choreographing
your own emotionless ballet
a calculated tour de force
in a society where love is
just another four letter word.
paint by number lady
with your padded shoulders
and money perfect face.
you leave nothing to chance
you are an ice cube
(i wish i could) cream queen
just another chip
on the shoulder.

Frederick Francois

Muse

Unconditionally,
They worship her.
Thousands come to rest
At her spike-heeled feet,
And thousands more will come,
Bearing libations
Of ink, blood, and tears.
She speaks with ink from their blood's fruit,
But only when she chooses to speak,
With visions of jade green,
Long, slender nose,
Dark, neatly-cropped hair,
And high, pronounced cheekbones--
A cat's face.
She lives atop a granite-glass Parnassus
With elevators
And a revolving summit,
Her deadly blue venom in her hand at all times.
They know her,
Madam Editor.

Gynger Ingram

Pomegranite

Pomegranite.
Molten pomegranite they say
Flows like pomelava,
until,
trapped by cruel sentimentality,
it is sealed within
and made to glow within
a pomelavalamp.

Jeff Wingard



Loss

H. Scott Jolley

Is this how it ends, then, with your typewritten name staring blankly at me from a white card stuck to the ground? Is that all I have left to comfort me now that you're gone? Dad, why did you have to go so soon?

As I stand here, looking down at your grave, the reality of your death has still not hit me. I still expect you to come through the door in your worn overalls and cap with your usual cheerful smile, carrying a bag of groceries or your mail. Do you know that I don't remember the last time I told you that I loved you?

Do you remember, Dad, the happy times we spent together? The late nights when we talked about everything from world politics to my latest high school crush, the "quality time," the help you gave me with my homework? It seems impossible to do any of these things without you.

It's so hard to believe that you won't be here anymore. When I look around, I constantly see something that painfully brings back memories of you: your immaculate Marine dress uniform; the almost endless stacks of books in your room; the pictures of you in exotic places like Lebanon, Hungary, or Powhatan; your tapes of *Carmen*, *Aida*, and *La Boheme*.

I don't want to go around eternally beating my breast and tearing my hair out from grief, but it's hard not to. Every day is a struggle when I wake up and remember that I can't call home and hear your voice. I can never lose another game of Trivial Pursuit to you. I won't be able to touch you, or hug you, or say "I love you" ever again.

While I try to keep my chin up and smile and be cheerful, I'm just putting up a false front. It's like I'm empty inside--there are no feelings of sadness, anger, frustration--I'm just a void.

I must and I do realize, however, that although your life with us is over, a new one is beginning. Dad, I know you're in a place free of pain, worry or sorrow. While my life may be harder and darker without you, I know that you will always be with me in my heart and my mind.

It's difficult to resist the urge to just sit and do

nothing but mourn. But you always knew best, didn't you? You always said, "When I die, I want you to cry for a week or two and then get on with your life." I'm trying and, carrying your memory with me, I will succeed.

When I see sunshine streaming through the clouds, I know you're there. Whenever I hear strains from *La Boheme*, you're right there listening to it. And whenever I need you or want you, I know you'll be there.

Dad, I would give anything in the world to have you back. But then I know that this is somehow the way it was meant to be. You're happy where you are and knowing that makes me happy, too. I hope it's not too late, Dad, but I love you.

Hope

Who is there?
There behind those cheap sunglasses.
Blue eyes shot full of Hate,
Fear, Anguish, Need.
Grey patch of skin framing
The Stark White Window of your Soul.

Neon dreams of white days, filled
With Young Lovers at beck-and-call;
Blue, cool nights under a benevolent
Moon. A beam pierces your heart.
Release, Departure, Espace.

Reality.

A hard Hand, tough bone and muscle
Wound tight, full of anger.
A harsh word spat from
A cruel Mouth.
Tears as acid creasing the
Soft Face of a young girl.
First wrinkles spreading like malignant
Starlight from your Eyes.

Waiting for the tough Skin to form.
the Scars that protect you
from further Hurt.
Waiting.

Jason S. Martin

Mo's Pros

Jan Sweat

As Mo sat in the first row of the "honored hero" section, his silver hair glistening around the edges of his ball cap, he unconsciously bit his thumb nail. He imagined himself pitching the World Series. The stands were empty, of course. How else could he sit in such a prestigious section? Looking over the empty field at Fenway Park he gently pulled at his ball cap and let his imagination take over his aging mind.

Phil Loftus squirmed, sweating from the heat coming from the sun's powerful rays. He looked over the hoards of billboard advertisements and wished he was at Sunny's Cafe, sipping a large Budweiser. Phil was short and plump, with a ruddy complexion and dark hazel eyes that were dulling with age. Years of construction work had taken its toll on his skin, evident from hard, crusty sores on his arms. Such a contrast, Phil and Mo. Mo stood 6'2", weighed 210 lbs. at least. He was tan, with a trace of youthful, powerful muscular physique trimming his aging body. Mo always wore his blue and white cap with his blue and white jacket. "Mo the Pro" was stamped on both, symbolic of his home town colors and nickname. Not many friends left to "sit" with. Many dead, some moved South to escape the cold winters of Connecticut. "Guess we better mosey on over to Sunny's before the lunch crowd sets in. We can do your instant replay anytime. Did ya hear me?"

"Yeah, yeah. Just another minute or two," replied Mo, still gazing onto the field. Phil waited five more minutes.

"Damn it, Mo. Let's go. I'm hot, I'm thirsty. And I'm bored. We can hit the city park by 2:00 and play a few games." Phil was referring to shuffleboard, which Mo thoroughly detested because it was an "old man's game."

Mo responded with "Sure, Phil. Let's go play with the old geezers. Maybe, just maybe, we can slick 'em into a quick game of Old Maid. Don't you ever get tired of being retired?"

Phil reflected on Mo's words, sharp as usual. He had

nothing left to prove. No one left to prove it to. He was at peace and damn glad of it. He really enjoyed shuffleboard, horseshoes and even gin rummy. How frustrating Mo could be. Never, no never at peace. Always wanting to "replay his life," preferably with an audience. Still out to prove he was the best, the "pro" as he called himself.

"Mo, I'm hot and tired and ain't 'bout to argue. We've come here near 'bout every damn morning since '82 and I don't argue. But the game's been cancelled for us both. Its time you faced it, old man. You've already seen the most action you're going to."

Mo barely heard Phil's words of wisdom. He was concentrating with intensity on a plan. Still forming in its embryonic stage, "The Game" was on. At least in Mo's mind, for now. It was such a great idea! My own World Series. The "Old Timers" against the Red Sox! Mo knew his position as past president of the Lions Club would afford him the contacts needed to pursue his idea. Hell, he could even pass it off as a charity, a fund-raiser, and gain even more support.

"I'm leaving, Mo. Now!" Phil shouted. "Ya coming?"

"Sure, Phil," Mo raised up, painfully aware of the arthritis in his legs. Hiding physical pain was necessary for a man like Mo. The mere admission would signal defeat on some level. "Let's go to Sunny's," Mo hollered after Phil. He was mentally trying to organize his plan and figure a way to "drop the bomb" on Phil, his catcher-to-be.

"Not no, but hell no" exclaimed Phil, as emphatic as he had ever been. This is the craziest idea he's ever had, Phil thought. He's seventy-seven years old and gonna play ball. Sure. Phil visualized eight old men being carried via stretchers off the field for the whole city of Boston to see.

"I mean it, Phil. Ya can't let me down, not on this," Mo pleaded. "With a few weeks' practice we can sock it to them. Give 'em a run for it. I don't recollect you lettin' a little challenge take you down, Old Man," Mo chided. "You with me, or you against me?"

Ah! He had struck the nerve, as usual. Mo was

Phil's oldest pal, which took him back to '44. Hometown ball team, no fancy equipment. Just good friends having fun. Mo had to "shine" even then, or he felt like a failure. He got attention, all right, usually for fighting. God, how ol' Mo loved a good, down-home fight. He once hit the umpire and had to "sit the bench" for three weeks. This idea now, it was crazy! But Phil knew how sick Mo really was. Ol' Doc Porter had told him one day on the "courts," in confidence, of course. Made him swear to secrecy. Alzheimer's. If his body didn't go, his mind would. But Mo never let on.

Could they do it? Could Mo do it? Who would "they" even be? Phil thought. Phil knew a man like Mo thrived on action, not boredom. Maybe...

"How in God's name do you expect to convince Gus and the "geezers," as you call 'em, down at the courts? And what makes you think the Red Sox ain't got nothing better to do on their Monday off-day than play ball with somebody's grandpa?" Phil asked. Mo had always been a man of action. He had built the city ball park (or at least installed the plumbing), and just last spring he redid the mayor's plumbing in the downstairs bathroom. All his civic work had to count for something, too.

"I'll go to the manager of the Red Sox, right after I see the mayor and meet with the city council. Offer him a chance to enhance relations with the senior community. After all, we spend more money on those afternoon games than all other ages combined. Give 'em a chance to give something back to the city," Mo stated.

Phil left Sunny's Cafe reluctantly, knowing his job of convincing the guys at the court would be a real headache. He turned and watched as Mo turned the corner, heading for the Mayor's office. If anyone could pull this off, Mo probably could. If he lasted that long.

Wednesday morning there were sixteen men, ages fifty-five to eighty-one, at the city ball park. All were dressed in shorts, some plaid, down to their knees, all with brand new ball shirts, displaying "Mo's Pros...Sunny's Cafe" in black letters against a grey background. Each number symbolized the man's age, except for Gus who grudgingly agreed to be 69 instead of his true 68. Gordie was 68, too, and wouldn't consider going one number up.

All men were ready for practice, none were ready for a game. As each man took his turn at bat, Phil pulled his wide-brimmed Mexican "fiesta" hat over his eyes. The caps wouldn't be ready until Saturday. Mo pitched and grimaced at how out-of-shape he really was. Tall and muscular, what a deceptive package he was wrapped in now!

"Got another crick in my back," hollered Marty Martinez, former vet. "Let's take five, Mo." Mo was eager to continue, but didn't want to start an argument. Old men were hell to argue with. And he knew he needed all of them.

"Okay, boys, let's take five," hollered Mo towards the dug-out. Men of age are also creatures of habit. Gordie was snoozing in the dug-out and Gus was in the portable out-house tending to his 10:00 a.m. nature call. "This team doesn't need practice," Mo thought. "We need a race-horse dose of speed around here."

Mo gave his best pep talk, having to pause more than once to wake up Gordie. He also passed out his own "bee pollen" 500mg. energizer tablets, and wiped the sweat from his dark brows. "Phil will be our alternate sub. The Sox agreed to give us one hour playing time on Monday week. The council is handling all the advertisements. Sunny's will front the dough for the shirts and hats. No fancy stuff, boys, just good and solid hits is what we need. Any complaints, you take 'em up with Phil."

Day after day went by, practice after practice. Mr. Jim nearly had a heat stroke and had to quit. Will developed "ulcers" and wouldn't quit or play. Jim Koonce had to leave, his wife was back in the hospital with diarrhea. Only twelve men left and one week of practice.

The men lined up on the field, each team making a continuous line as the National Anthem blared over the speakers. As each man's name and position was announced, Mo grinned at the thought of his "idea." He glanced towards the stands, pleased to see the boys passing back and forth hollering "hot dogs, popcorn." Like a real game! The stands weren't exactly packed, but John Saylor on the city council said he expected at least 2,200. Not to mention the families, extended families, and friends of each "old-timer." Scattered throughout the stands of

Fenway Park, sat Mo's audience. He was silently relieved that Beau Brummer, the new Sox manager, had rescheduled the game for 11:00a.m. Obviously the intent was not to spare the "gents" a whopping case of heat exhaustion, but to get it over with so the Sox's day off wouldn't be a total waste.

Phil verified the presence of each man on the roster as Flo, a retired R.N. and lady friend to Gus, checked vital signs on each player. Flo listened to erratic heart-beat after beat, and imagined herself on the other side of the field, checking younger men with more *vital* vital signs. Ol' D.E. Phillips almost didn't show, thanks to a severe allergic reaction to Mo's 500 mg. "bee pollen" tablets. Sonny-Boy Brister had obviously remembered his morning toddy; his eyes were red and he was his usual obnoxious self. Flo had already reproved his hands twice during her check, and threatened to cram her stethoscope down his feeble throat. What a line-up!

Rising to recite the pledge was a moment that should stand still, Mo thought. "Mo's Pros" trotted, walked, and hobbled towards the dug-out. The air was cool, with a firm breeze blowing, allowing a very comfortable atmosphere for the players. Mo felt more alive than he had in years. He would do something special today; what, he had not decided. perhaps a home-run in the ninth, or pitching an inning that would be talked about by the Sox afterwards. He made a mental note to do something to get attention, show what a young whipper-snapper he still was. (The Alzheimer's Disease had surfaced in memory loss, although sporadic and manageable thus far.)

Phil had no such "pre-game" busy work. He did not have time to do much more than think "Damn you, Mo." That was about as reflective and profound a thought as Phil could muster. Profane was Phil, profound was Mo, at least today.

Gus was at bat first, surprised at how calm he was. No one would ever know how much this day meant to him. Since he was a kid he had dreamed of playing Fenway, and, although not quite the original dream, he savored each moment. He looked across the field at the virile and confident young men, and saw himself in each face. The boy on second, especially, reminded him of himself,

struggling at Pawtucket. He was jolted to hear "Ball one."

"To hell with a homer, if I can just hit the ball. A grounder will do, Your Honor" (his reference to the man above).

On the way out field, Mo was a bit dizzy. He faced outfield for a few minutes, pretending to be working on his hand signals. When the dizzy spell passed, he turned to pitch. He saw the grin on the batter's face, and felt like throwing the ball towards his ugly head, but knew it was too early for violence. Three-outs last inning, in less than five minutes. They didn't intend to set that record. Sonny-Boy Brister was "catching" imaginary fly-balls behind third base, while Jo-Jo "signaled" anybody that would look towards him, in plain view of the other team, who acknowledged his antics with smug faces.

The score was 39-1, Sox favor, seventh inning. A sudden turn of events left the Sox without four players, one their main pitcher. A couple had felt a little "strange" but passed it off literally. Within minutes there were four Red Sox players in the bathroom, being "coached" by a twenty-four hour flu bug. Beau Brummer, the manager, had to "sub" for pitcher for the last two innings. The one hour game had turned into two, then two and a half.

Phil reluctantly took his position as alternate on the home plate, then remembered a catcher stands behind home plate, not on it. The equipment was enough to do his back in, Phil thought. He turned as he heard the crowd, hollering their coaching strategies, and wondered how the hell these boys play with all that noise. He never thought of the years he had sat up there, out-screaming anyone close to him. Flo was busy taking "vitals" in the dug-out, and Mo was arguing again with the umpire. The inning hadn't even begun! When it did, it was swift. Phil had missed a few, actually more than a few, but he was satisfied with his performance. He hadn't expected to get such a kick out of playing. (He also got the hiccups, and indigestion, and one hell of a headache, all in one inning.) He watched as Mo waved his arms, again arguing with the same umpire. This time, Jack Hudson, resident dentist and nephew to Sonny-Boy Brister, called him off the field. Jack Hudson was the coach for the game,

in title only. Mo had made that clear when he was told earlier that he couldn't coach, pitch and manage the team.

It was during the last inning, as Mo was running towards home plate and Phil was trotting towards first that Phil realized something was up. Phil had been so caught up in passing first and heading towards second (only because most of outfield was heading towards home plate and there was no one out there to stop him) that he hadn't looked directly towards home. "Oh God," he froze. It had to be Mo. They were circled around home base because of Mo. Phil headed towards home base, now in a trot-run, the best he could do.

As Phil came closer to home plate, he realized Mo wasn't lying or dying on home plate, he was standing. Phil shoved past players from both teams to get closer. Then he saw what had stopped the game.

"That was the damnedest thing I've ever heard you do, Mo," said Phil, surrounded by men from both teams. "Yeah, who'd have ever thought..." Gus raised his hands to express himself. "Would you have though it, Johnson?" Gus turned to Jake Johnson, pitcher (alternate) for the Sox. Jake smiled, and before he could respond, Buzzy Yazinski, Boston's second baseman, responded with "Mr. Mo, how the hell did you do that? Better yet, why the hell did you do that?"

The pub was crowded; even Beau Brummer had joined the post-game party. Flo was in seventh-heaven and didn't care if Gus got mad. Mo savored his moment, trying to milk as much suspense and attention as possible. "Well, boys, I'll tell ya," he began, then turned to motion for another Miller-Lite. "I had the run. I knew it. I mean, uh, the team had the run. But that damn umpire popped off one time too many. Ya hear me? Yep, one time too many." Mo stewed on those words, turning deep red as he remembered his anger. "As I crossed home plate, I heard him say it. No siree, I heard him. Ha! I hurt him, I should say." The other men laughed, those that had witnessed the scene harder than others. "No pay for today. Damn old near-dead buzzards, taking up a professional field to play bumper ball." As he repeated the umpire's words, Mo turned a deeper shade of scarlet. Phil wondered if he wouldn't have a stroke just telling the tale. "Well, I

figured it was as good a time as any to show him what a "dead buzzard" could do to his face. Hey, Johnson, did you see ole' Jo-Jo try and trip him as he fell? Just as I reached for him, he started to say somethin'. Wham. One hit was all it took. Yes, just one hook."

Beau Brumner could not openly condone Mo's behavior, his temper out-of-control. He did, however, laugh as hard as anyone, to himself. He had wanted to "pop" Jim Dickins since Little League days. He was always such a bully, and a smart mouth. How many times, Beau thought, had he come so close to doing what Mo got away with. Man, age had its advantages after all! He had to admire a man of age. Especially one with a hell of a punch.

Mo beamed as he passed out "guest" tickets to each of his men. The "honored hero" section. Yep. The next time he sat there, it wouldn't be with just his memories. Not to mention how busy he would be till the end of the season. The "Deadly Dentists," Jack Hudson's sponsored team, had challenged Mo's Pros to a game Friday after next at the city ball park. Who knows. If they could sober up Sonny-Boy, put D.E. Phillips on B₁₂ instead of "bee pollen," and let Flo serve as a "morale boosting mascot," they might just have a chance!

My Guts Are On This Page

My guts are on this page.
The feelings of hate, love, joy, and depression.
All of them are here.
My guts are on this page.

My guts are on this page.
I hate him! Each time he pulls a stunt.
He is pushing me. I don't solve the problem.
My guts are on this page.

My guts are on this page.
Love, me. I'm actually in it!
I'm fat, ugly. She's beautiful. I'm in it, bad.
My guts are on this page.

My guts are on this page.
Each time skin is passed, the smile.
All the crap we've done. I'll miss him.
My guts are on this page.

My guts are on this page.
Shunning me, ignoring me, avoiding me.
Thoughts of death come, should I?
My guts are on this page.

WAIT....

Your guts are on this page!

Brian Sanders

Give It A Whirl

Liz Bonnette

My mother came home from Wal-Mart this evening bearing a purple and white striped hula-hoop as if she'd discovered the wheel. This will make the fourth hula-hoop initiated into our family. I remember the first one quite distinctly.

When I was six years old, I began to have reasonable doubt in Santa Claus. After all, I decided, no one can travel all over Winnfield in one night, much less the whole world. But why, I mused, should I tell my parents? I decided to play along with their pretense. However, I couldn't resist the urge of "trapping" my parents at their game.

On Christmas Eve, after the stores were closed, I wrote Santa a letter and asked for a mousetrap game. Surely he'd have an extra one on board. I showed the note to my mother and went on to explain that there would be no need to bake cookies for Santa.

"Santa gets enough cookies," I grinned. "That's why he's so fat!" I stole a glance at my dad, who was shaking like a bowl full of jelly.

"I'm going to leave carrots for the reindeer instead."

A look of fear came onto my mother's face. She even tried to talk me out of the scheme, imagine that. . . Did I get a mousetrap game? Of course not.

"Where's my mousetrap game?" I demanded, after surveying the rest of my presents. I was informed that Santa had "left a hula-hoop in its place." As you may guess, I was about as excited as a cardboard box. I didn't even know what the thing was! It was red! It was ugly! It wasn't a mousetrap game. And worst of all, it had confirmed my previous hypothesis about the bearded man from the North Pole.

"Look, dear, Santa left you a letter." Mom acted surprised to find a letter peeping out of my stocking. I tore open the envelope and plopped down in the floor to read it.

"Did you help Santa write this letter?" I asked, eyeing my mother suspiciously.

"Well, um, darling, er, why do you ask?"

"Because it's your handwriting, mother!" I replied, tossing the letter aside.

"Well," Mother suggested, "Let's try the hula-hoop out." She then demonstrated how to hula. She hopped inside it and began swinging it around with her hips. Only seconds later it clanked to the floor.

"Oh, heck," she sighed. "I used to be good at this." She then insisted that everyone else give it a whirl. After a few brief days of debut, the ugly red hula-hoop was shoved into the back closet and forgotten.

I must admit that the new purple and white hula-hoop is a great improvement over number one. The circumstances by which it entered the family were certainly better. My family had a hula-hooping contest on the back porch tonight and yes, I won. I'm the Champion Hula-Hooper. Big deal. We never got a mousetrap game.

Oh, No, Not You Again, Not Now!

You.

So that's why.

That's why I've been in a bad mood
for the past two days.

You always come
at the worst possible time
when I have a million things to do
and deadlines to meet.

You're no fun to be with,
and your upkeep is too expensive.

You cause me
to take my problems out on my friends,
and sometimes
you even make me sick.

Furthermore, you're ugly,
and you ruin my clothes.

I'll be glad
when I'm my mother's age,
and you're out of my life.

Gynger Ingram

Our Reflections

When the wine was chilled
I took a glass
and sat on the stair
near you
to watch our reflections
in shaded windows.
Trees danced beyond our eyes,
and you lit a cigarette,
allowed the smoke
to curl 'round your fingers
and float up
like a serpent poised to strike.
But seeing our reflections
in two panes of glass,
I stood to go,
for the wine had grown too warm
in our chill air.

Madelyn Boudreaux



J.S.

Doubt

i feel!
i feel like i'm trapped
in a Spider's web
strung out
on a loosely spun
thread
i feel like i'm lost
in this secluded web
where even...
even fools fear
to tread
i feel like i'm dying
in this damn Web
i'm filled with
emptiness, loneliness,
& dread!
But,
i feel.

Shari Scaife

The Beauty Pageant

Peter Rolufs

Darcy Lobstranded's hair curled in big loops. Her mother, seated with her father in the fourth row, used to cut it with sewing scissors. Between snips, Mrs. Lobstranded would affect a critical countenance--knitting her eyebrows, pursing her lips just so--but really she knew nothing of style. She saw only beauty. That was the trouble. Also, she pulled too hard.

Mrs. Lobstranded placed the beauty pageant program on her lap and anticipated her daughter's swimsuit appearance. She had been, of course, reluctant about the whole idea at first, but now she felt more comfortable. She recalled a recent family outing to the beach. Who could ignore such an embodiment of radiance? An idiot. Like a breeze from the ocean, beauty spilled out from Darcy. Mrs. Lobstranded remembered how she watched her daughter wade in the water and how she couldn't help feeling pride in the sheer grace of her daughter's form. Though usually concerned and wanting to call Darcy back, she had spent moments at peace with herself, even glad to observe the young men who were wading nearby. She concentrated on those feelings and waited for them to return. Everyone in the audience was so well dressed. The mistress of ceremonies was a famous celebrity.

Contestant number one mounted the stage confidently with her hair done in the new, sassy, tossed to one side back-to-school-for-the-spring-semester fashion. Darcy, number three, knew that a more conservative hairstyle, in the classical tradition, was more appropriate for a beauty pageant, and that it would provide advantages contrast to such boldness.

"Isn't she beautiful?" the mistress of ceremonies squealed as the first contestant entered the stagelight. The audience roared its agreement. Mrs. Lobstranded only blinked at the queer shape that approached the foreground. It weaved slightly, as though on a balance beam. After pausing for several moments to face the audience, it turned to face the sailboats painted in the background. Sporadic falsetto cries cut through the dying applause. Mr. Lobstranded cleared his throat.

"Which is Darcy's number?" he asked his wife.
"Number three."

The hands were so still. But as the right foot resumed its position, a tiny convulsion went through the body.

"She's nervous," Mr. Lobstranded commented.
"They all are," Mrs. Lobstranded replied.

Darcy saw that contestant number two took only two steps before she was in view of the audience. She felt she needed more of a running start to get the walk right. It was actually quite easy, but she practiced it often before the pageant--holding the chin slightly up, keeping her stride even, and not getting distracted by outside sources, thoughts, or minor discomforts of her own body. Several particulars about her impending violin performance did continue to bother her. A certain rhythm problem at the end of the coda was never completely solved with the pianist, and she was still unsure about an allegro even though she had played it right many times.

"She's lost weight," another contestant remarked about number two as she strode into the stagelight, engulfed by cheers. Darcy forgot about the violin performance and reflexively glanced down at her hips. The precious compliment had the reverse effect on anyone to whom it was not directed. Once, in the cafeteria, she was lucky and overheard the same words in unmistakable reference to herself as she passed a table. Just the thought of a new, slimmer Darcy had a delightful appeasing effect on her appetite. It was like pizza or cake. She didn't even want the salad and Diet Coke that would have been her lunch. She felt like a pixie alighting in a magic meadow when she seated herself at the table where her friends were gathered.

When it was Darcy's turn to appear, Mrs. Lobstranded clutched her husband's hand. In exchange for her weak smile, she received from him the generic another-day-with-the-Lobstranded-family look. Darcy appeared, like the other girls, as though on a conveyor belt, perfectly poised. Slightly expanded lungs gave extra fullness to her breasts and flattened her stomach between her ribs. Mrs. Lobstranded bit her lip. She wanted to ask the question again,*why*?

"Because," Darcy had explained over the phone, "it's

an opportunity. I can enhance my poise and confidence and develop skills that will be helpful in my career."

"But you're in college," Mrs. Lobstranded was confused, "You have to study."

"I know. I'm getting A's and it's sponsored by the university. The winner gets a full scholarship and lots of recognition."

"Recognition for what? Not A's."

Mrs. Lobstranded had the exaggerated image in her head of her scantily clad daughter, standing on a stage, being ogled by a lascivious mob.

"It's a beauty pageant, Mom, so the university can choose a representative to attend events. They need a hostess for university functions. Shouldn't they look for beauty, charm, and talent? If I have those things, shouldn't I use them?" After a moment's reflection, Darcy added, "Do you want me kept in a closet?" The question was absurd, but it found the root of Mrs. Lobstranded's anxiety. Her daughter was beautiful, charming, and talented. Such gifts would inevitably be recognized in anyone. Out of all beautiful, charming, and talented people, why should Darcy be the one to refuse recognition and disservice her university?

"Could you send me my violin as soon as you can?" Darcy asked as her mother sighed her consent. Mrs. Lobstranded would send it tomorrow morning and stipulated that Darcy would pay for part of the evening gown. They both looked forward to choosing it together on Darcy's next visit home.

Darcy turned to face the sailboats.

The Dreamtime

Your body still, enshrouded
In the goose-down and warm wool
Folds of sleep.
Only a momentary stirring,
Just enough to check that
Often cruel instrument
That forever governs your life.
 it is kind,
 This time.

One eye opens, acknowledges, closes.
Three hours left to sleep,
Three undisturbed, silent hours,
Belonging only to the moonlight.
You bore down deeper
Into the goose-down and warm wool folds,
 Instantly comfortable,
 Immediately dozing,
 And revelling in it, savoring.
Then capturing the conclusion
Of an elusive dream,
As if a comet by the tail.

Gynger Ingram

Precision Under the Knife

When lines between us
Smear like crayon,
An icy scalpel
Pointed by panic

Slices us to show
One half can be whole.

Kathryn Nance

From a Circle in Space

Life is a trial in reason,
but a reward in knowledge.

Louicreacy Ayn Sonnier

Afterlife

He walked across Time Square
At sunset late one dusky afternoon
As the shadows of great non-existent trees
Fell across his path--
His mind a pool of subdued security.

Gynger Ingram

To

have you been there?
that place that we all go
to get away
to talk amongst ourself,
to engage in strange thoughts
that peace-filled place
too good
to be
here?

Nicole M. Smith

The Ravin'

Oh obdurate belt-flinging sassafras
Tea-drinking
Polka dancer before me,
What are you doing here?
"Nevermore," quoth she.

Jeff Wingard

Zephyrs

Madelyn Boudreaux

I am huddled under the musty quilt, stretching my toes down to the cool, smooth spots at the foot of the bed. December winds are screaming by the windows; some catch the chimney just right and turn the house into a giant flute, blowing middle C.

Greyson is asleep a few inches away; if I stretch my fingers out over the distance I could touch his arm. He could sleep through a world war, and the creaking house and winds lullabied him to sleep hours ago. In the morning, he'll be fit and rested, I'll be stiff, exhausted.

I toss on the hard bed; it seems odd to sleep in what had always been my father's bed. Since we had put Mom into one of those Senior Citizen's Neighbourhoods (she's spry for a 73-year-old, but bored without Daddy to nag) the house has been closed up, gathering dust, and Greyson and I thought we'd spend Christmas away from the University where we teach and try to get the house into some



semblance of order. If things work out, we'll make it our summer home.

Somewhere in the back of the house a shutter has come loose in the wind. I'm awake anyway, and I don't want to fix a broken hinge tomorrow, so I get up, creep on the freezing wooden floors to the back room. As I reach out into the freezing gale to grab the wildly swinging shutter, I can see the wind-swept trees bent, like worshipful ghosts, in the silver moon-light. Trembling, I feel the icy, whirling wind whip my hair, and I know I'll never come home again.

Sinai Hospital
1968

It doesn't matter that you were caught
hanging from the trellis outside your bedroom window
like a crucified apostle, blue in the face
or
that I wrapped you in my guilt

For pushing you into life
too early
clutching and sucking needs from a dropper
as I absolved you with tears and prayer
washed over you in a symphony
of silence
I watched

You were always
so small
and I
protected you from eyes and hands
and love
that watched my mother die
as you stared blankly into my fear
not knowing
not understanding that too much love
could kill

So I prayed for God
to give me the strength
not to love
you

and you lived
and you breathed
and the hurt never lasted long

Until I died
with your hand in mine
so small
knowing you would live
with me
forgiven

William Keith

My Greatest Victory Over Fear

Vera Dyess

I had many battles with Fear the early years of my life. By age thirty-three, I had moved through the ranks to the front lines, facing the big guns. Against medical advice, I had planned a fifth child. This was to be a celebration child for my husband and me during a special time of our lives.

In the early weeks, I began having complications which I had not experienced in my previous pregnancies. I heard God speak to my mind: "Fear is your worst enemy." The tone strongly indicated that if I did not conquer Fear, that tragedy would result.

The skirmishes began. It soon became evident that Fear had armed himself with a cruel and grueling plan of attack. I prayed often and asked others to pray with me. In my third month during a temporary lull, following weeks of illness, weakness, and even a short hospital stay, I erroneously assumed that Fear had taken a retreat.

Suddenly, without warning, I began to bleed. "This can't be happening!" I screamed inside. Fear, alias Panic, bombarded the door of my spirit. I shut the door hard, pushing against it with all my inner strength. I knew that if I ever let Fear in to take control, he would have gained position to have his orders carried out. Knowing this made it increasingly natural to firmly stand in faith, truly experiencing peace that passes understanding. I called a minister to pray with me and the bleeding stopped immediately. I made an unscheduled appointment with the doctor.

The room was deathly silent as I lay on the examination table while the specially-amplified stethoscope was sliding over my abdomen. Dr. Baker looked at the nurse; she looked back at him. "I don't hear a heartbeat," he said coldly, matter-of-factly, "Let me check you again in a month."

Without a word of comfort or sympathy, I left the office in a state of semi-shock. The thought seemed unbearable that my baby was dead--the baby that I already loved, dearly and personally. I would not accept this; I

would not give in to Fear. I was thankful to accompany my elderly mother to her doctor's appointment only a few days after my visit to Dr. Baker. Dr. Phillips, who is also a minister, had prayed for me and my baby on several occasions. However, I did not mention my dilemma to him that day. As he was about to leave the room, he stopped and looked at me. God had impressed him that something was wrong concerning my pregnancy and that he was to pray for me. With my mother and I agreeing in silent prayer, Dr. Phillips entered into bold warfare, taking authority over the spirit of death and speaking life to my unborn child in the name of Jesus. A sweet peace entered the room.

The next days were inexplicably trying. The battle raged fiercely, with Fear still demanding to enter. At times through sheer exhaustion, my emotions found release in tears, but not in despair. I stayed pressed against the door. It was not until Sunday, a long two weeks after the crisis began, that I awoke with full assurance that a victory had been won. Fear had fled, reluctantly giving place to exuberant relief, thankfulness, and joy. I marvelled at what had transpired, a spiritual episode that mere words could not explain. It was the most dynamic manifestation that I had ever experienced, which illustrated that faith is indeed the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Two more weeks passed before I heard Dr. Baker say, "Yep, that's a good, strong heartbeat." He did not seem to notice my lack of surprise. I was not one bit more relieved than I had been since that Sunday when God had given me the assurance that all was well.

Dr. Phillips came to visit and pray with me in the labor room. He observed the rhythmic beep, beep, beep of the monitor that was recording the vital signs of my soon-to-be-delivered child and mused thankfully, "So, this is the baby who had no heartbeat!"

Every time I look into the face of our beautiful four-year-old daughter, I thank God that he has not given me the spirit called Fear with its consequences. I thank God for love and power in the name of Jesus and for a calm and peaceful mind in times of battle. This cherished taste of victory has forever conditioned my response to Fear's call to arms.

The Dancer

The dancer awaits her chance.
Twirling pirouettes on hardwood floor.
She has to be the best.
Parents need someone to be proud of.
Little sister looks on adoringly;
She needs someone to look up to.
Instructor watches proudly.
She wants her student to be the best of them all.
God is watching, she hopes;
She wants him to see her struggle.
"I have to be the best," she thinks,
"So many people are counting on me."

Dave Wilkinson

The Shady Tree

Summer's shade will never sequester
My love--she is there.
Her beauty blooms as bright as the leaves
She comforts,
Singing softly as each falls,
Despite how near or far.
Her love is greater than nations,
Or what we expend.
The uncomely we put aside, she treasures.
My love sits beneath the shady tree,
Though the leaves have all blown away.

Tony Alvis

oven-hot

it was a lazy
oven-hot
backporch
sort of day
leaning back with
propped up feet
big brimmed hats
gossip quietly
nodding
back and forth
back and forth
in the breeze
thick heat crawled
into our lungs like
Heinz catsup on
sizzling French fries
we talked of the weather
oh how we wished it would rain

and it did rain
big beautiful drops of
ice-cold
pink lemonade

we drank for days

Liz Bonnette

American Rome

Here is America
Rome of the nineties
a nation like Caesar
a census of one
waiting in darkness
like chords on computers
to shout angry words
across peoples and places
subtle like Babylon
Brutus technology
connecting a city
American Rome

Nathan Land

Junkyard

Gynger Ingram

The place reeked of steeped oil, a smell that tended to become lodged in the junction between one's nose and mouth, and stay there for a long time. A thick, gray haze hung low over the junkyard excluding the night sky. Substitute starlight, glaring beams from security lamps, emitted their piercing triangular patterns, creating waves in the smoggy midnight dusk that seemed to shimmer incongruently, like angels' wings, over the piles of Detroit ghosts.

They weren't merely piles. In fact, they were more like small mountains of neatly-stacked blocks, all effortlessly and effectively crushed by giant industrial machinery.

Atop one such hill near the center of the piles sat one lone man, in a car with the top long since peeled away. No one knew how long he had been sitting there. The watchman didn't care. In fact, he probably never even noticed. From a short distance, he appeared to be just another drunk old man, holding out in the junkyard with no place else to go.

His hair, what was left of it, hung in thin, crusty strands of matted gray straw. His skin was so deeply folded on his face and hands that one could easily grasp whole handfuls of skin minus flesh. He had no buttons on his shirt, and some gray and white stubble peeked through from under his collarbones. His lower body was concealed within the wreck where he sat, but his most distinctive features were his eyes. They did not appear as eyes at all, but dark, lonely recesses, small caverns into this deserted cave of a man. He did not speak.

A coughing and cursing form lumbered his way through the heaps toward the central one. His appearance only slightly surpassed that of the other man, who sat motionless and did not acknowledge the newcomer who continued to stagger toward him, his filthy clothes glued to him by his own sweat, a brown paper bag endearingly clutched in his right fist. He climbed up the heap and

found a precarious perch on another wreck not far from the original occupant.

He sat back, and both he and his bones groaned. He smacked at the rusted car door several times with the flat of his palm. When a light night breeze began to blow, sitting in those old cars was like one last joy ride in a convertible for the two old men. The newcomer lifted his bag to his mouth and sucked down some of the cheap liquor it contained. Finally, he spoke.

"So this is where we end up," he began. "It just don't seem right. I mean, they make a place for old cars that ain't any good any more, but they don't make a place for us. You get what I mean, Mister?" The other man slowly, tiredly, nodded, as if his wrinkled neck needed help from the wind, and his eyes remained expressionless.

"No place for us," he continued. "I've been on the street for two years. I've got no address, no phone number, hell, I even forget my Social Security number. You know how it is." The other man continued a slow nod in the breeze.

"They say you can't get Social Security if you ain't got an address. But you tell me how you can pay rent for an address without Social Security?" He swigged his liquor again. The other man slowly nodded.

"It's just plain unfair. When a car gets old and wrecked, they put it in this place, but when a man gets old and crippled from some old war wound, the only place he's got to go is the street. America. It ain't right." He turned around slightly and said, "Hey, Mister, what do you think about the situation? Tell me what we did to have this come to us in our old age." The man in the other car responded only with a lethargic nod.

"Well, I guess you don't care either. You probably figure it's none of your business anyway. Or, maybe I'm not good enough to talk to, is that it? No, I'm not good enough for anybody except the other winos, right?" Again he looked around at the stranger slightly above and behind him. His anger and frustration began to fuse with his liquor. Both his heart and his temper began to race.

"Nobody's good enough for anybody else these days. That's the trouble. You can be curled up cold and hungry on the sidewalk and people will walk right over top of you

without even a second glance, like you were nothing but one of these junk cars. It makes me downright mad" No response.

He looked up and around again. "I'll tell you something else that makes me mad. That's when people don't speak to me when I talk to them, like you, Mister. What's your problem, don't you know how to talk? You ought to after listening to me rattle on like this. So, tell me what's on your mind?" Only another empty nod.

"Now look, you. I'm talking to you. Now I'm mad, and I'm going to come up there and deck you if you don't talk to me, you hear?" The other's head sank forward, then back again. "Now come on, you. You're asking for it," he fumed, climbing out of his seat and heading angrily for the other man.

"You're just like all them beaurocrats downtown at the Housing Authority. I talk and talk and nobody ever listens, nobody ever pays any attention, nobody ever cares until it don't matter any more, nobody ever does...until the end!" He shouted in vehement anger through hoarse coughs as he scrambled up to the other man. He finally reached him, eyes red with booze and anger, breathing hard.

He seized the other man by the back of the neck and effortlessly lifted his withered form from the car. Only then did he realize. The other man in fact had no eyes, only empty sockets. His arms dangled at his sides. His form ended slightly below the waist; his lower body long since eaten away by rats and worms. Decaying rib bones now protruded through the gray and white chest stubble. And then, without any provocation, the folds of skin began to drop off his face and drift to the ground, revealing blackest flesh, flesh that squirmed and glistened like the gelled pools of rancid oil on the ground.

The drunk man held the corpse at arm's length. His arm and hand started to convulse, and he laughed. First, it was a drunk man's laugh. Then, it became a cackle, the cackle of a crazy man. And finally, it became a high, echoing screech, the screech of a dead man.

Cemetery Cat

After Sunday sets
Cemetery cat
Slinks behind the gates
To play with lonely bones
In cryptic shelters.

On dated doorsteps
brown lily gardens,
Fat mongrel cat yowls,
Paws the crumbled stone,
Tumbles down

Into under-ash,
Tomcat sniffs the bones
Asleeping, bats them,
Bounces tigerish,
Playing tag,

Darting, slouching back again,
Fetching brittle sticks.
Aurora waits outside the gates
Rascal hides in hemlock tree,
Sleeps 'til Monday sets.

Noel A. Ponthieux

A Night in the Country

Black muslin engulfs us
And our souls stir,
Roused from their old slumber
By silence, the complete and unyielding sleep of man.

No sound escapes; our paltry tin mules lie
Dead, cold and lifeless sculpture
Devoid of art or function; even the television is mute,
Its sluggish flow of phosphorescent heroin plugged until
morning.

The night rules now, slow grey mist in the cool air,
Surrounding our homes, melting into the leaves,
Caressing my body like a familiar lover.

Sight dims as the mind expands,
The cloak above pricked by those pitiful stars,
Rent by a pretentious moon.

The sounds now are those of eternity:
Ominous flap of the hawk's wings,
Pain and ecstasy of the breeding cat,
Vicious howls of the dog-pack--
And this above all, the incessant call of the insect,
The constant scrape of the cricket, saying

*We were here long before you,
And we shall remain long after;
This world was ours,
And your human god protect you
If we decide to take it back.*

The day has dulled our senses, our imaginations, our
lives;
We see only the obvious in its flaccid light,
Hear only the insignificant,
Think only the scientific.

I, too, once worshipped the day; I have a new mistress now.

Night's blood is Dark and Hot and Wild and Sweet--
And my soul will feed.

There is something far older than this puny world
Of shaven apes learned to add.

Drink it in deep,
And you too may want to join in
The incessant call,
The constant chant,
The threatening song,
The war-cry of the crickets.

Joe Weinmunson



Jive Black Nite

driving through this land of reds and greens
now black, jive black nite
kerouac leading the way
my sleep eye pulled up to the fawn
on side of road
texas
followed by meteors and prayers
it had to be announced to my companions,
 my comrades,
"this means *something*"

making our way to little border town
mission
what a name for such a pool of thieves
proffering shady cement pads
 and grapefruit
up to retired america

Tabatha Thompson

Louisiana

Monday morning
bayou woman
making
bread
with hands red as the clay of Mississippi silt
looking past the windowless window with eyes
vacant
like the stare of crawfish
big red ones
that she eats gingerly like a New Orleans window shop
 whore
Washing the instruments of the men she beds
wishing her man would take her up
the river once again
to the sounds of Mardi Gras and the paid for room
on sheets pressed, white with small daisies
she laid
staring at the ceiling webbed like the veins of her legs
still strong
still dancing to the laugh of music she hears over the
 silence
of months at home she longs for New Orleans and jazz
like
the longings she had for him when they were first married
 and
he spread her thighs wide in ecstasy and then pain of
 childbirth
she remembers with regret and still the loss haunts her on
Monday mornings
when she makes bread

William Keith

Hollow Holey Foot

hollow holey foot
trying not to crunch
so wildly
through
but the taptapping realization
that it's too timid

f***-----there is no noise

run wild
like the jazz beat image god
rabid even
like the red
eye spot thoughts
going rampant
through the head

no longer a white mudslung hero
with her complacent feet
satisfied to sit

Tabatha Thompson

The Rain Sings to Me Tonight

the rain sings to me tonight
it echoes my mind, my heart

oh, your loveliness
your wretchedness

i try so hard
"i hate you" is i love you

each drop, repetition
a part of the larger sound

William R. Murphy

Tete A Tete

we fought like starving dogs
over imaginary bones
he going for my soft spots
i for his jugular.
he recoils from the impact
of every stiletto word
i fling with square between
the eye accuracy.
i know how much pressure
to apply. he knows when
to give in to our
tete a tete
eyes locked
noses touching, lips
separated by still a few
words escaping, soft
gentle words
a trying kiss
reassuring touch
and he slips into me
as i cannibalize his whole being,
realizing he knows exactly
how much pressure to use in his anger
and i always know when to
surrender to him

Frederick Francois

Seethe: Jeffrey

what's new? vampires in north america. that's what...
everyone here is.
they dissect your thoughts, opinions
want to delve into your mind, lay it bare.
they'll never get me;
i'll go down with the ship.
it's empty, of course.
(yes, you can go back)

a close friend of mine
(too close for comfort)
told me i'm becoming an alcoholic.
i think she's right,
and don't care--honestly.
(replace the something with nothing)
i keep telling her
if i sink far enough into oblivion
i'll find my obsession's there.
(he'll wait for me, oh yes)

talked to mother today
she's sending my leather jacket.
(it's so warm and secure)
she tells me she's just realized...
that i don't care--honestly.
you've got to keep pretending, she says.
(that he will never die)
you've got looks and charisma...
use them and the people around you
(attitude like venice in the summertime)
and you'll never fall from grace.
i don't care, she says,
if you've no mind to take part.
(we do what we're told)

my obsession's hazy now;
technology can bring him back to me, oh yes)
i will try to remember, Jeffrey
(smiling now, he's almost gone)

oh god!
my retribution--for allowing myself to care...
(never say die)
it bites,
like the vampires,
laying bare the soul,
cutting,
(never say die)
exposing.

dream billowing sails
struck down
by lightning-sharp
fangs.

and you're with me.

Sam Jacobsen

Self-Help with a Friend

Jason S. Martin

Characters:

Shawn Marshall: 19 year-old sophomore, psychology major

Jeremy Smith: 19 year-old college sophomore, business major

Setting: Jeremy and Shawn's apartment, neat as a pin, Shawn is seated on the couch reading a paperback self-help book. He is dressed casually with his bare feet propped on the coffee table. The room is brightly lit. Jeremy enters wearing sweat pants and a tattered T-Shirt.

Time: 6:08 pm, October 1987

Jeremy: Hey Shawn! Whatcha up to?

Shawn: Nothing much, and you don't have to yell.

Jeremy: (sitting on couch) Hey, no problem. What ya readin'?

Shawn: Just another self-help trash book.

Jeremy: Do people actually believe that crap? Why do you read that stuff?

Shawn: I AM a psychology major. This STUFF is popular with the public, and I need to keep abreast of popular opinion. It wouldn't hurt you to read this, too. You being a business major, you need to know as much as possible about the average consumer.

Jeremy: Hell, I've enough to read with my assignments.

Shawn: (places the book on his lap) Well, I wouldn't want any stimulating reading to interfere with your partying.

Jeremy: Don't start preachin', Shawn.

Shawn: Hey, no problem.

Jeremy: Whatcha gonna do tonight?

Shawn: Study as usual. I've got a psych test tomorrow.

Jeremy: Yeah? Which class?

Shawn: 241, Nonparametric Statistics.

Jeremy: Jesus Christ! It sounds like a death sentence!

Shawn: It's dull, but not hard.

Jeremy: Yeah, well. Nothing's hard for you. When are you gonna break your record and actually get a "B"?

Shawn: Never. I've made it through twelve years of Catholic school and one year of college. Why screw up now?

Jeremy: Still I think a "B" would be worth it to cut loose a little.

Shawn: Never.

Jeremy: Whatever.

Shawn: Oh, yeah. I may as well tell you now. Joe'll be spending Thanksgiving vacation here with me.

Jeremy: Oh, yeah? You're not going home?

Shawn: No.

Jeremy: (pauses) All right. What's up?

Shawn: Nothing.

Jeremy: Hey, how long have we been knowin' each other?

Shawn: About sixteen years.

Jeremy: Yeah, that's right. And you want me to believe that you're not going home for Thanksgiving, and nothing's wrong?

Shawn: (smiling) I guess I'd better tell you now ... My mom and dad are splitting up.

Jeremy: No Shit?!

Shawn: None whatsoever.

Jeremy: Christ! I can't believe that.

Shawn: Yeah, well, you haven't been around them much over the past three years.

Jeremy: How delicately put.

Shawn: Yeah, well. That's it in black and white.

Jeremy: Are you pissed at your dad?

Shawn: Not really. Mom had more or less acted like Superbitch to him over the past three years.

Jeremy: You pissed at your mom?

Shawn: I'm not pissed at anyone. I'm kind of relieved. Hell, when I used to go home it was like walking into a military zone. They'd snipe at each other all weekend. It drove Joe crazy.

Jeremy: How's he taking it?

Shawn: Joe? Well, Mom says that he's pissed at both of them. That's why he'll be here for Thanksgiving. He says the neither of them have given him much to be thankful for.

Jeremy: (laughing) Apparently Joe hasn't changed. So you talked with your mom?

Shawn: Yeah. Today.

Jeremy: Have you talked with your dad?

Shawn: No.

Jeremy: Did she offer an explanation?

Shawn: Yeah, but she didn't have to. Some shit about the relationship was dead, and that everybody'd be better off.

Jeremy: Seems like every parent comes up with that same crap.

Shawn: Yeah. It is amazing how something so insignificant can turn into warfare.

Jeremy: What kicked off your mom's bad attitude?

Shawn: Well....Dad stumbled into one of her Tupperware parties drunk.

Jeremy: (laughing) No Shit?!

Shawn: Then....he barfed all over Mildred Perkins' shoes.

Jeremy: All right! How come I've never heard of this before?

Shawn: I tried to keep it quiet.

Jeremy: Good job!

Shawn: Yeah, well, it was pretty damned embarrassing.

Jeremy: Yeah, but I'm your best friend.

Shawn: It's just that Mom got so bent out of shape about it.

Jeremy: Jesus, this is what kicked off your parents' separation?

Shawn: You may as well say "divorce." It's imminent. But no, that's not the reason they started to grow apart. That was just one in a long line of progressively explosive arguments.

Jeremy: Man, I really don't know what to say.

Shawn: You don't have to say anything. Besides, you may not be so sympathetic after I tell you what I have to say next.

Jeremy: And what's that?

Shawn: Well, I don't want Kara spending the night while Joe is here.

Jeremy: Aw, c'mon! You've got to be kidding!

Shawn: Jeremy, hell! If you and Kara want to get naked, ya'll can do it at her place.

Jeremy: Hell, her place is like Grand Central Station!

Shawn: Not my problem.

Jeremy: Hey, it's NO problem. Anything for my best friend. But I don't see what the big deal is. Joe's seventeen.

Shawn: Still, I don't want him gettin' any bright ideas and knocking up some high school cheerleader.

Jeremy: Aw, he's probably already bonking some little teen-queen cheerleader.

Shawn: Speaking of cheerleaders, where's yours.

Jeremy: (standing up) Oh, yeah. She's probably waiting for me at the union.

Shawn: Yeah...and half-naked.

Jeremy: Hey, she's got it, may as well show it.

Shawn: Yeah, but it's October!

Jeremy: (takes off shirt and flings it across the room)
Hey, she's too good to cover. I've gotta go.

Shawn: Hey, don't you have an English test tomorrow?

Jeremy: Yeah, but I can't get too excited about Herman Melville and Walt Whitman.

Shawn: Maybe you can get excited about an "F" in English. I swear, don't you care about the important aspects of college life...like classes, studying?

Jeremy: No lectures, Marshall.

Shawn: Well, at least pick up your shirt, pigpen.

Jeremy: I'll get it later.

Shawn: No, now. I didn't just clean up this place to have you start messing up again. I swear, don't you have any pride...

Jeremy: (interrupting) Don't lecture, Marshall. I came to school to get away from my parents. Don't play Daddy.

Shawn: Oh, I thought you came to school for an education...no, excuse me, YOU came to school to party.

Jeremy: (laughing) You're right. I need a fresh T-shirt.

Shawn: Right there on the counter. Oh, yeah. Leave me a cigarette.

Jeremy: (putting on a shirt) WHAT?! Mr. "Clean Mind--Clean Body" wants a cancerstick?!

Shawn: Yeah, well, it's been a long day.

Jeremy: No problem. (hands Shawn a cigarette) Hey, do you remember when my parents were separating, and I ran away from home? And you spent the night with me in the woods behind your house?

Shawn: (laughing) Yeah. What a great night.

Jeremy: Yeah. I wouldn't have made it through that crap without you.

Shawn: No problem.

Jeremy: Yeah, well, maybe I can return the favor, no problem. (Jeremy walks over to his discarded shirt, picks it up, and throws it through the bathroom door.) I'll see ya later. Take it easy.

Shawn: (smiling) Yeah, see ya.

(Jeremy exits, and Shawn picks up his book again)

Observation

in the Beginning, there was Darkness
no Sun, no Moon, no Stars.
in the End, there will be Darkness
no Candle, no Neon, no Fluorescence.
somewhere in between, Light will experience
the Live of a Teen Suicide
Short, Anguished, Melancholy, Hopeless.

Light will be here for a moment.
Relish, Enjoy, Bask in the glow of
the Dying Ember.

Jason S. Martin

From The Other Side of Suicide

Brian Atkinson

You who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by tomorrow, I invite you to age a little by considering an impatient character of spontaneity.

It was difficult to understand how our hero made it as far as he did. He had been dealt serious blows in life--serious to the extreme that he often considered and tried suicide, only to awaken to the pains of his many failures. Just what is it that made people like Julian feel so isolated from the joys of life? Why was it that the isolation gave him only glimpses of a lifestyle that he thought he wanted, and at the same time, did not allow him to pursue this never ending bliss.

I seemed to be Julian's only source of release. The only time that he got out of that depressingly small apartment of his was when I was feeling sorry for him and decided to take him out. But I rarely did that anymore; every time I did he would manage to embarrass me in front of my friends. It wasn't my fault that he used such a high and obscure form of language that none of my friends understood what he was trying to say. I was even baffled most of the time; his vocabulary was just so high over my head. I finally arrived at the conclusion that he was damaging my chances of making it into that wonderful group of DKE's.

It was Friday night and, like most weekends, I had a date with the girl I had decided to ravish that week. As I was just about to walk out the door, Julian called. He asked whether or not I would like to go out with him. I lied to him when I said I would have liked to, but I informed him that I had a date that evening. With a seemingly understanding and cheerful "good-bye," he hung up. As I

was driving to pick up Lori I kind of laughed to myself about the call. I knew that he could easily convince one of those nerds studying English to go to the poetry sweatshop or something. I just didn't care for that sort of entertainment.

On our way from Thibodaux to Baton Rouge, Lori and I said very little. The football game was on the radio and I was too deep into it to hear even if she had said anything. Well, I reasoned, there would be plenty of time to catch up on all of the latest gossip over dinner at Chalet Brandt.

Just as I had figured, there was. I told her all about what had been happening during the week since I had seen her last. It is hard to believe that I had done so much. When thinking about it, I could never figure out where all my money had gone last week. Now that I talked about it, I couldn't believe that I had enough for that weekend. Yes, I concluded, Fred's had been fun Monday night, Murphy's, although I didn't remember half of it, had been fun Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday nights I had had parties at my place. "Yes, the week was one power week," I finally told Lori.

Lori seemed to want to ruin that date. All that she could talk about were her problems with her family. Frankly, I did not care if she and her mother were not getting along. But I let her go on--I knew that if I didn't there was no chance of pounding her later on that night.

After making sure that she had seen the \$127.59 charge on my Visa bill, we picked our favorite nightclub for dancing. I wasn't in there for five minutes when I was challenged by "Party Fred" to chug a beer with him. So, with everyone cheering us on, I beat him. Of course, I couldn't walk away after only one; that would have angered him because I usually at least give him a second chance. This time, he beat me. We slurred that twenty bucks to the winner of the next round would settle the question of who was the better drinker that night. After all, two out of three is fair enough. The son-of-a-bitch beat me again. Oh, well, I had plenty of money.

I had a hard time making it through the big crowd of my friends; they all found it necessary to laugh at me for losing. As if my pride wasn't hurt enough. After finding

Lori and giving her a drink, I left her to talk to some friends who had just walked in. I think that I did a good job of proving my popularity to her because she agreed to go home with me.

Upon putting down the receiver, Julian sat on his couch, staring at the little bug crawling up the wall. Anger burned within him and intensified with each crescendo of the music that he so joyously loathed. There was no one else to call; his parents' answering machine kindly reminded him that they were not home. If only Julian had had someone to comfort him, he might have had a better evening. What was going through his mind was fleeting thoughts of happiness and depression. He was determined to somehow shed his burden of depression, so he could experience an awesome happiness. Julian knew that his books would no longer transmit him to the other world, serenity. But those pills that he was given when he had his teeth pulled would. His mom returned his call. He told her that he loved her and goodbye forever before the phone fell to the floor.

I drove Lori back to my apartment. It didn't take me long to seduce her; I showed her my waterbed within ten minutes of opening the door. I cursed when the phone rang. Its insistence finally made me answer it. Still not having climaxed before the phone rang, I relieved myself before telling Lori the bad news. After about a half of an hour, we finally decided to go to the hospital.

"Cliff, why would he do this?"

"I don't know. You would think that he would be happy. I mean, I knew he was having troubles, but I never guessed that they were this bad. Stupid idiot, why didn't he call me to talk about it? I'm sure that I could have taken him out and showed him a good time. Shit, one good drunk was always enough to keep him happy for a month. Oh, well. He was always a weird one anyway. But still..."

"They say that his type can't be helped. Really, I read in the *Enquirer* that life goes on normally for Julian's type of person. Then, out of the blue, SNAP. Don't worry, it was no more your fault than the doctor who prescribed him those pills. Besides, we can't stay long.

My parents did not know that we came to Baton Rouge, so you're going to have to take me back to Thibodaux soon."

"I know, I just want to go by and see his mom and dad. His mom sounded pretty bad off when she called. She told me that they began to worry about what he said when she called. So, she convinced his father to drive her to Julian's just to check on him. Needless to say, their findings were shocking."

"Yeah, I guess going to the hospital would be proper thing to do."

Julian's parents had already left the hospital when Lori and I arrived. It seemed that they had to drive to Memphis in the morning; neither of them was taking it too well and the doctor had told them that Julian would be all right.

Finding Julian unconscious, Lori and I decided that there was no use in waiting around and that we ought to be in Thibodaux already. So, we left. Julian was all alone.

Kate was an average-looking girl, with no physical characteristics to make her stick out in a crowd. But, she had made it. Her schooling had paid off when she was offered a job in Baton Rouge. Though she was not overwhemingly happy, her job had done a lot for her. It seemed to give her confidence that had never before been instilled in her character. Of course, she was still a little shy, but every life that she helped save brought her a little closer and closer to overcoming that.

After a hard day at work, Kate was feeling good about herself. When she went to the nurses' station to make sure it was O.K. for her to leave she found out about Julian. Gosh, it had been so long since she had seen him.

The walk to Julian's room was like a dream to Kate. It started out when she was in the homecoming court at L.S.U., but couldn't get a date. She could almost feel as despondent now as she did then. A smile came over her face as she recalled the precise moment that Julian asked to be her date. It was all too good to be true. What was this incredible guy doing asking her out? Surely it must have been out of sympathy because no one in his right mind would have asked her out under any other circumstances.

Although she did not verbally question his motive, she assumed that the end of the date signified the end of this romance.

Kate vividly remembered the dreams of the nights that followed. She and Julian seemed to always be hugging or sharing tender caresses. Only thinking about them made her so happy. She never imagined that they could materialize; Julian was too good for her.

As she neared Julian's room, she wondered whether or not all of the visiting family and friends would welcome her into the crowd. After all, she had never met any of his family; she couldn't even imagine them because Julian never mentioned them. Finally, with a certain self-assuredness, she pushed open the door to find a reflection of herself, almost four years ago.

Kate took a seat beside Julian's bed and cried, because she knew at least some of what he must have been feeling earlier that evening. It hurt her deeply to see this fine guy hurting so badly. If only she had not been so damned unsure of herself they might both be happy now.

Kate realized that she never really knew this guy. There were now so many unanswered questions. The night was filled with screams to the heavens. One request was asked over and over again--God, please give me time to love him.

Holding Julian's hand, Kate fell asleep.

If there were questions that Kate wanted answered, there had to be three times the questions when Julian came to. Yes, he did remember her, but what was she doing here? Why had she taken such a sudden interest in him after not talking to him for all these years. The last thing that Julian wanted was for somebody to feel sorry for him, yet here was this girl, sleeping with her head on his chest. Julian concluded that he liked the company. There would be plenty time for talking later.

I went on about my ways. Parties all the time, girls whenever I needed them, and of course, all the money I needed for fraternity life. As the semesters rolled by, I gradually lost touch with Julian. I wish that I hadn't because he had so much to offer me, so much more than a

whole room of fraternity boys could have, but I didn't take him up on his offer. It seemed to me that my life was on an unchangeable course. I could see the end nearing.

While I was living, I was living the life of a character, a role that I was forced to play all of the time. When I outgrew my part, the writer of my script saw no way of fitting me in any other way. I was destined to be known as Cliff, the guy that knows how to party. Although I tried to live a more fulfilling life, one where I bettered myself for the sake of doing so, one where I enjoyed moments of solitude, one with different friends and different hobbies, that simply wasn't the life for me. I had no patience. I would not sit around to wait for the time when things would get better. How Julian could have coped with the feelings that I was experiencing that day was and still is beyond me. But I can now understand that suicide isn't just for people like him. It is a state of consciousness that every experimenting mind considers and tries to understand. It is a state where anything can happen, just as anything can and will happen if one dreams long enough. For me, those dreams were too tempting. I didn't ever wish to leave my bed to make them happen. I wanted to accomplish everything that I had ever dreamed in one dreaming period.

I fell asleep and dreamed of firing a gun at my head. There was nothing else to look forward to.

"Julian, why did he do it? He could have been anything he wanted to be. Why this?"

"I don't know, nor do I care. The guy thought that life, everything was easy, given. He knew where I was; he was too ashamed to come to me to talk."

"Don't be hard on him. Tell me honestly, if I had not been there when you were released from the hospital, would you have had another chance with your life?"

"I don't know; I just don't know."

Old Woman of Mexico

[she knows what it's like] old woman
of Mexico
so lovely in your poverty

just beautiful

scarf of many colors
like Joseph
wrapped around this vision of you

photographs for a quarter--

the immediate striking of poise--
stern portrait--

for no other could I write this--
I remember what is not to be forgotten

Tabatha Thompson



A Different Honor

Randall Pleasant

During the dark winter night, a thick fog settled over the forest along the banks of the Rio Sabinas. The fog seemed to smother all activity, causing a deep quietness to engulf the forest. The careful steps of a deer sounded like a light roar, the soft wind like a cold song. Near morning slightly louder sounds penetrated the quietness of the forest.

Through the wet, frost-covered forest a small group of men slowly crawled toward the river. Because the moon was blocked out by fog, the men were blind to everything not within a few inches of them. By dawn, the fog had thinned out enough to see a short distance, but the men felt just as blind because it played tricks on their eyes as it flowed and swirled in the frigid wind. Every small bush looked like a man, each shadow like an animal, Indian, or Mexican.

A light rain began to fall, causing the cold to sink deeper into the men's bodies. The captain of a group of Texas Rangers crawled behind a small oak tree at the edge of the river. From this position he was able to get a clear view of a small camp on the far bank. Recognizing that the man sitting in the camp behind an old tree stump was in reality just a coat and hat hanging on a stick, the captain turned and signaled to the man on his right to move back into the woods because it might be a trap. At that instant a rifle roared on his left.

After the captain was certain the camp was empty, he raised up and looked over at the boy on his left and said angrily, "After two hundred miles of riding and eating dirt everything's gone to hell because you had to shoot, you just had to shoot."

"I seen him. He was wearing that same brown coat and I got him real good too," the boy answered.

"All you did was knock that coat off a stick where he left it hanging. If he's anywhere around you let him know just where we're at," the Ranger captain said.

"I tell you I got him," the boy replied.

The Ranger captain looked out across the small

river and said, "Well, if you want to swim in that cold water to check for sure just go right ahead, but you better think about dry powder on the other side." Walking over to where the others were starting a small fire, the captain said, "Well, Josh, since you just had to shoot, you walk back and get Frank and the horses."

Half an hour later, the boy, riding his horse at a dead run, returned. Jumping off the horse before it came to a full stop, Josh cried, "Captain, Frank's dead! His head is almost cut off!"

"That damn Mexican!" the captain said, "He must have crossed back over the river after he built that camp."

"You should have seen him, his head almost cut off and most of the horses gone too!" cried the boy again.

Pushing the boy out of his way the captain said, "Killing Mexicans ain't no game, boy, best you take a man's understanding of it. We take our pleasure in it, but it ain't no game. Let's get back and bury Frank. Least ways he don't have to look for the horses or walk part way back to San Antonio."

"Why don't we keep after him?" one of the others asked.

"Cause that's the Sabine River, and the States are on the other side. Different laws there about killing Mexicans," the captain announced. "The Federal troops at Fort Jessup can take care of that Mexican. Anyway, those troopers would rather skin me instead of him."

Another Ranger asked, "What are they pissed at you about?"

"I shot one of them soldiers last year over in Natchitoches. That general at Fort Jessup don't care much for someone killing one of his troop," the Ranger captain answered.

"What happened?" another Ranger asked.

Walking down the bank to the water's edge, the Ranger captain answered, "A man don't always have to have a reason for his killings. I just felt he needed killing." Relieving himself, the captain mumbled, "Drown in this, Mexs'." The others couldn't hear his words, but they shared his hate.

Five miles to the north, Manuel Flores crossed the Sabine River into Louisiana. At last he felt a little safe.

The past few days had been full of hard riding in extreme cold with Texas dogs biting at his heels. Although he had taken most of the Texas Rangers' supplies and four of their horses, Manuel was soaking wet and without a coat. Worst of all, he did not have any dry gunpowder.

In the part of the forest where Manuel was traveling the fog had not thinned. In fact, it seemed to be getting even thicker as it swirled on the cold wind, creating confusing patterns in Manuel's vision. The fog, Manuel thought as he watched the frigid, colorless vapor float on the wind, is like the Americanos, pale and everywhere. Manuel wondered to himself if this might not be some plan of God, or work of the devil, to bleach the whole world of color.

A few miles from the river the elevation of the land increased enough so that Manuel was above most of the fog. Leading his horses, Manuel walked up to a large log cabin where two boys were splitting firewood. At Manuel's request, the two boys built a small fire. After warming himself for a few minutes, Manuel started setting the supplies he'd stolen from the Rangers on a small piece of deer skin.

An old Lipan Apache woman walked out of the house and said, "Oh Manuel, you no look good today."

Manuel looked up at the old woman and said, "Vieja, I need to see Jose."

"What you bleed of? You need to be sewn up?" the old woman asked.

"It is not my blood," Manuel answered, "But I haven't eaten in three days."

"You know that all of God's faithful get fed here, even people like you," replied the old woman jokingly, "Jose will be out soon." There was no smile on the old woman's face when she added, "One of the girls will bring you something to eat, but you act right. We hold our daughter's honor."

"Eat a pear tuna here," Manuel thought, "and the cactus will pick you in the gut with a blade."

After Manuel had eaten, Jose walked out and sat down on the ground near him and said, "What you want to waste my time with? You think I want to buy or trade for that Bolillo junk?"

Manuel smiled and said, "I need to trade this good Bolillo junk for some powder, clothes, and some flints. Maybe a pair of boots too."

Jose handed Manuel a small jug of whisky and said with a laugh, "My friend, let me give you a lesson in trading."

Three hours later, Manuel had dry clothes, a good heavy leather coat, boots, and most important of all, dry gunpowder. However, Jose did not have the gun flints that Manuel needed to replace those lost from two of his pistols a few days before.

As Manuel cleaned his guns, Jose put another stick of wood on the fire and said, "I think you must still be messing around in Texas. I don't think the Americanos just gave you their junk, and I never knew Americanos to bleed on people for fun either."

Staring into the fire, Manuel said, "The damn Americanos, in Texas they treat us like dogs. They think Spanish women are whores and they even make fun of the Holy Catholic fathers."

"The Americanos do not treat our people much better here in Louisiana," Jose said. After thinking a few seconds Jose added, "I don't remember you having much respect for women or the holy fathers yourself. I can't really remember you having too much respect for anything."

"I do what I please," Manuel replied, "But I do it with honor."

"You confuse your hate with your honor, my friend," Jose said. "You better learn to get along with the Americanos. They are everywhere! They are like the rats in my barn. I don't think there is anyplace in the world a man could go where there is not a bunch of Americanos raising hell. And don't worry my friend, God always takes care of his faithful, not that I have ever considered you one of his faithful."

"The pale Americano dogs, they are the ones who know nothing about honor," Manuel said, "All they believe in is their greed."

"It is true they are immoral and nauseating in their greed," Jose replied. "It comes with their race. But remember, this is their country now and we must live by

their rules and laws. We can only hope that we can teach our children the difference between our people and the Americanos."

Manuel stood up and said, "That was no good trade for me old man."

"I thought it was a lot of fun," the old man said through a large smile. "Anyway, you stole it." As the old man's grandchildren began to pick through the things he had traded, Manuel climbed onto his horse.

"Where do you go, my friend?" Jose asked.

Looking down at Jose, Manuel answered, "I go to the Adaes village, maybe to Natchitoches, then up to the Caddos. The Caddo village is the only really safe place for me. Damn Americanos!"

Jose rubbed the neck of Manuel's horse a few seconds then said to him, "You watch yourself in the Adaes village and Natchitoches. The Americano soldiers at Fort Jessup are said to be looking for you. Our people at the Adaes are scared of the Americanos and will not want you starting trouble there. They have their families to think of."

"I know you are right old man, but I live by my honor, and I have much hate for the Americanos," Manuel replied.

With a voice that reflected much pain and sorrow, Jose said, "The past is gone, and it will never be like before. You will have to change and forget the past or you will have nowhere to live. Not at the Adaes or in Texas." The old man's voice took on a much happier sound as he said, "Tell my people in the Adaes village that this old man still trades with both his balls."

Manuel spurred his horse and called back with a laugh, "I tell them you trade like the Americanos make love to their women."

About a quarter mile from Jose's house, Manuel stopped on the narrow trail. In the distance, he could still hear the old man cursing him in Spanish, very bad French, a few Indian words, and, most insulting of all, English. As he listened to the old man cursing, Manuel loaded all of his guns. Then Manuel continued eastward toward the Adaes village.

After spending the past nine months in the open lands of south-central Texas, the road from the Rio Sabine

to the Adaes village seemed like a cold dark tunnel. The shadows of the great pine trees covered the road so thickly that the sunlight was reduced to just beams of light. The beams of light reminded Manuel of the way the sun had shone through the windows of the great church he had visited the past year in Mexico City. On that day in 1838, Manuel had felt that God would stand beside him and his people, but he now understood that whatever happened in Texas during the next few years would be in the hands of men, mostly Americanos.

Four times Manuel waited in the woods beside the road as small groups and families of Americanos rode past, most bound for Texas, he thought in disgust. Although he was sure that none of them knew him or would have recognized him, he did not like to take chances with the Bolillos. The sickly pale people were too strange and dangerous. So strange and offensive were the ways of the Americanos that even the French in Natchitoches, who had made an art of trading, really didn't know how to deal with them. The word of Indians and most of the French could often be taken for truth in negotiation, but no one could trust the word of the Bolillos, who breathed nothing but stale wind in their dealings.

About an hour before dark, Manuel stopped at a small creek just outside of the Adaes village to rest and water his horses. After choosing the best horse from among the four he had taken from the Texas Rangers, Manuel mounted it and slowly rode into the small village to sell the other three.

The Adaes village was a small, unorganized cluster of mud-walled houses. A Catholic church stood at one end of the village next to a graveyard. About a hundred people lived in the village. The majority of the Spanish, however, lived to the north along the shores of the Spanish Lake and the banks of Bayou Pierre.

Manuel went first to the house of Antonio Cordova where he sold three of his horses. Manuel took a bad deal on them, but he needed the silver to buy more supplies and some gun flints. After putting the horses in a corral, Antonio told Manuel, "The Justice of the Peace, Senor McDonald, was asking the other day if you had been in the village. The general at Fort Jessup told him that he heard

that you might be back this way. That general must remember the trouble you tried to start a few years back between the Caddos and the Americanos in Texas."

"Feels good to know that everybody remembers me," Manuel said.

The Americanos said it was against the laws of the States. They worry that you might try such a thing again," Antonio added.

Manuel figured that Antonio was fishing for information. He was always looking for new information concerning Texas to sell to the Americanos at Fort Jessup. "I don't plan to break no laws, I just want to visit my family," Manuel said as he took the reins of his horse and started walking down the street.

Antonio called out, "That won't make no difference to the Americanos. They remember the last time you came home. Best ride with your eyes open."

The one small store in the Adaes village was Manuel's next stop. After he paid for some supplies and a couple of gun flints, Jose Sanchez, the store owner, handed Manuel a letter and said, "This came to me the other day from New Orleans. Inside was a letter to you from Mexico offering you another commission in the Mexican army. No one knows but me."

"It is good to have a friend who can be trusted," Manuel replied.

"I do this because I haven't forgotten what happened to my brother's family in San Antonio," Jose said.

"To have good vengeance one must have well-focused hate," Manuel replied.

"If the Americanos, or even the men of the village, knew what this letter says, they would kill you by the time they caught you."

"That they might, but there would be many Americanas crying in the night," Manuel said jokingly. Hearing voices approaching, he put the letter in his shirt pocket and walked outside where he was met by a number of the Adaes village men.

The leader of the Adaes men, Romulto Bustamento, said, "We heard you were coming back. They say you might try again to get the Indians to fight against the Americanos in Texas."

"People say a lot of things. What I do don't concern you," Manuel answered as he tied his supplies to his horse.

"It will concern us a lot if you piss off the Americanos," Romulto said, "We have no love for them, but we have been able to live fairly peacefully here."

"I just came back to see my boy," Manuel said, "I'll be gone in a few days. I want no trouble."

"Just to make sure we sent a couple of men to Fort Jessup to let the Americanos know you're here," Romulto said. "They were told to ride slow, to give you time to take care of whatever you needed to, but not enough to start trouble. If you cause trouble for us with the Americanos, we too will look for you."

Manuel climbed on his horse and said, "You're a real asshole amigo. Like women you worry about the Americanos. You have no honor left, no balls. You must have sucked too long at your mama's tit before you were weaned."

As Manuel slowly rode his horse away, Romulto called out angrily to him, "If you had honor you would take care of your child instead of raising hell and fighting a war that has already been lost. Raise your child and you'll be worried about the Americanos as much as we are. We have honor, but we also have children and wives!"

Just outside the Adaes village Manuel changed horses. He could not trust the men sent to get the soldiers at Fort Jessup to take their time. If the soldiers did come, he wanted a fresh horse under him. He also put the flints he had bought in the two pistols that lacked them.

It was almost dark as Manuel left the Adaes village, but the sky was clear. The cold night wind bit into his face during the trip to his ranch deep in the woods north of the village near the Spanish Lake.

Manuel's house stood on a small ridge in a large clearing overlooking a creek that ran into the Spanish Lake about a mile to the east.

After putting his horse in his barn with feed and water, Manuel picked up his weapons and walked over to his house. Opening the door, Manuel was met by the lonely faces of an old woman and a child. He knelt down and hugged his son, and then his mother.

"Oh Manuel, where have you been so long?" the old

woman asked, tears running down her face. "I heard you were dead. Then I heard that you come back this way. I know not what the truth was."

"I've just been riding around a lot, Mama," Manuel answered.

"Are you going to stay with us, Papa?" the boy asked.

"I can only stay for a little while, my son. There are soldiers looking for me and I have to go to the Caddo village," Manuel answered as he hugged his son again. He looked at his mama and asked, "Who fixed up the place since I been gone? In the woods I saw my brand on more cattle than I own."

"Romulto Bustamento been helping us," the old woman answered. "He has done much work for us. Gave us some cows he say he don't need. He was sending his older boys to help with the work, but the soldiers and some Americanos from Texas came looking for you and found the boys. Because they help us the Americanos beat them real bad until the soldiers stop them. Since then, Romulto comes and does the work himself. He is a good friend to us and a man of much honor."

"Why can't you stay with us, Papa?" the boy asked.

Holding his son close, Manuel answered, "I really want to stay, son, but I have many important things to do. With the Americanos looking for me it would be too dangerous for you and your grandmother if I stayed."

"One day you will have to give up this hate you have," the old woman said. "You fight a war that was lost three years ago. It's not even your country. This is your home, not Texas. You hate without reason."

"It is true hate I have," Manuel replied, "Hate for the pain and wickedness imposed on our people by those pale dogs." Manuel laid his hand on top of his mother's and said, "I do what I think is right. I do this not because of my hate for the Americanos, but because of my friends and my honor."

Holding her son's hands tightly, the old woman said, "Honor is for young men without families, not for a man of your age with a son. Family is where a man finds honor."

"I ride a different horse, Mama," Manuel replied. "I ride the stallion, not the mare. I cannot be at peace with

myself until this is finished."

"A man finds peace with his family, not with himself," the old woman said. "Let your horse eat the grass of home; forget the bitterness of Texas."

With eyes full of tears, the old woman started to speak again but was interrupted by a hard knock at the door. Manuel quickly took out one of his large pistols, knelt beside the door and motioned for his mother to ask who was knocking.

Before the old woman could speak, a loud voice called out, "Manuel, this Romulto Bustamento. I must talk with you."

Manuel opened the door, then stood back with his pistol pointing toward the door. Slowly, so that his hands could be seen clearly, Romulto stepped inside and closed the door.

Romulto paid no attention to the pistol pointed at him as he said, "You must leave from here as soon as possible. The Americanos from Fort Jessup will be here in a little while."

"Why do you send for the soldiers and then warn me?" Manuel asked.

"We didn't send for the soldiers," Romulto answered. "I might not like you, but you are our people. The Americanos know that you are here and of the letter from Mexico. When the soldiers learned that Jose had gotten the letter and gave it to you, they went to his store and beat him."

Taking a quick look out the door, Manuel asked, "Do you know how they found out that Jose was helping me and that the letter had come?"

After saying a quick hello to the old woman, Romulto answered, "Not really, but I think Antonio might have told them. When I left they were still beating Jose very bad because he helped you."

Manuel put his pistol back into his belt and said, "I must go and see about him."

"You must leave!" Romulto replied. "If you go back to the Adaes the soldiers will kill you, but once you are gone they will soon leave. To protect yourself and our families, you must leave tonight! The other men with me are getting your horse ready now."

Looking down at his son, Manuel said, "You're right. It is best that I leave."

Romulto laid a hand on Manuel's shoulder and said, "Do not worry about your family. We take care of our people."

"I know they will be good in your care," Manuel replied. "I thank you for what you have done for them."

The old woman slowly stood up and said to Manuel, "I must get you some food to carry with you."

"There is no time," Romulto said to the old woman. "We packed a little food for him, but he must leave now!" Romulto turned back to Manuel and said, "We will take your mother and son with us to make sure they're safe."

Manuel hugged his son and then his mother. The old woman gently held her son's face in her hands and said, "Those things you look for can only be found here. The honor and peace you find in Texas are not worth having."

"This is something I must do, Mama, something that I want to do," Manuel replied. "There is more honor in being thrown by the stallion than in riding the mare."

"The horse you ride is a horse of rage and violence that has no master," his mother said. "A man of honor controls his horse, but now it controls you."

"There is another kind of honor that you, as a woman, cannot know," Manuel replied. "I keep tight reins on my rage and bitterness, but I spur it hard."

"One day you will know better. Our love goes with you and we will pray to the Virgin that she watch over you," the old woman said as she gently rubbed the side of her son's face.

Manuel hugged his mother and his son once more, then walked out the door with Romulto. Outside, a small group of men from the Adaes village stood with Manuel's horse. None of the men spoke to him, but each man put his hand on Manuel's shoulder in a way that said more than words.

Romulto and another man helped the old woman and the boy into a wagon. The rest of the men mounted their horses and followed. Romulto rode off a little ways then turned and yelled back to Manuel, "Do not worry my friend, everything is the will of God. Nothing you do will be in vain if you believe in what you are doing."

Manuel had many mixed feelings as he took one last look at his ranch, but he felt justified in that he believed in what he was doing. Although he had not slept for a day and a half, Manuel got on his horse and rode to the north; sleep would once again come in the saddle. By morning he hoped to be halfway to the Caddo village.

It was three years before Manuel returned home. Hard riding and fighting had left Manuel scarred and looking much older than he really was. He and his companions had done the best they could, but Texas had remained in the hands of the Americanos. It was just the will of God, Manuel supposed. It was not in vain, nothing he wouldn't do again if possible.

Manuel never lost his hate and disgust for Americanos. On mornings when the pale fog flowed thickly over the land, a nauseating feeling would come over him and rage would burn in his heart as he watched the colorless mist. Although Manuel had a great appreciation for the colorful land and forest around him, he felt that part of his world had indeed become bleached of color.

Manuel did, however, by the time of his old age, come to know the honor and peace his mother had talked about. Still, he never forgot the honor of his youth. While sitting on his porch on late summer evenings holding his grandchildren, he often dreamed about the women, horses, and events of his past. When the hot summer wind blew against his face, he imagined that once again he was riding his horse at a dead run through Texas. Breathing the hot breeze, the old smells would come back to him: the smell of stale wine and whisky, gunpowder and blood, horses and dusty sweat. Manuel dreamed about past days when his honor was as warm and thick as blood, when passion for women and fighting were reasons enough to risk everything.

Manuel also understood something that his mother and the different women in his life were never able to understand. He understood that there are two types of honor, each good and bad in its own way, and that each has its place within the heart and spirit of the men who ride a different horse.

Contributors' Notes

Tony Alivs is a consistent contributor to *Argus*.

Brian Atkinson is a twenty-year-old junior majoring in public relations. He is from Morgan City, Louisiana.

Liz Bonnette is a sophomore at the Louisiana Scholars' College who participates in several campus activities. Liz describes herself as, "!!!!????!!!"

Madelyn Boudreaux is a freshman at LSC who thinks that dancing, writing, and screaming occasionally are the only ways to escape.

Holly Cope is a freshman psychology major at LSC who enjoys reading poetry and popular fiction.

Vera Jean Dyess is a freshman nursing major.

Lori Edborg is a determined art major who tried for two years and finally convinced everyone (see cover).

Frederick Francois is a graduate art major specializing in painting.

Michelle Gremillion is a junior at LSC who wonders if she is just another misunderstood human creature.

Gynger Ingram is still a campus eccentric and doesn't like to put titles on untitled poems. Lucy succumbed to feline leukemia on March 10, 1988.

Sam Jacobsen is a freshman at LSC who enjoys writing poetry but doesn't like to draw attention to herself.

H. Scott Jolley patterns himself after his role model--Clark Kent. He describes himself as a journalist sworn to uphold "Truth, Justice, and the American Way."

William Keith is a transfer student from Arizona State whose main interests lie in literature and writing.

Phaedra Kelly is a sophomore philosophy major at LSC who is painfully aware of the time she devotes to her writing.

Nathan Land is "a real swell guy." He likes to incorporate many different ideas into his poems.

Meghan Larpenter is a music major from Ponchatoula, Louisiana. She enjoys singing and writing poetry as forms of self-expression.

Jason S. Martin is a graduate student majoring in business administration. He writes poetry, fiction, and drama.

Carmen Martinez is a graduating senior majoring in art.

Herbert P. Meadors is a political science major. He enjoys writing and drawing.

William R. Murphy, II is a twenty-six-year-old art major. Bill says, "I like art."

Kathryn Nance, a sophomore at LSC, says, "I can't see as fast as I walk, so sometimes I slow down." Her car weedles on her, but she's happy anyway.

Randall Pleasant is a senior anthropology major from Spanish Lake, Louisiana.

Noel A. Ponthieux is a senior at the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts. She is from LaPlace, Louisiana.

Alan Rhodes is a very quiet, reserved English major who wouldn't bring in his "gooey" sonnets.

Peter Rolufs says he suffers from a "stilted, paralyzed brain." He is a sophomore at LSC.

Nicole M. Smith is an advertising major. She enjoys both art and writing.

Brian Sanders is a history major who hopes to attend graduate school at NSU, and then journey to the marvelous world of seminary.

Shari Scaife, a die-hard Jim Morrison fan and avid reader of *Rolling Stone*, is graduating and moving to Florida. These two goals are all that matter in her life right now.

Wayne Self is a sophomore at LSC interested in music and literature. He hopes to someday become a comic book writer.

Louicreacy Ayn Sonnier is a freshman at LSC with a variety of outside interests.

Jeanne L. Stallworth is a freshman at LSC who borrows the Assistant Editor's clothes.

Catherine Jan Sweat is a divorced mother with three children. She returned to school to further her education. Jan graduated in December, 1988.

Tabatha Thompson is a graduating senior psychology major whose interests include art and writing poetry.

Joe Weinmunson , a sophomore at LSC, is "a small, jelly-like creature accidentally conjured to this plane when Aleister Crowley had a few too many ."

Jeff Wingard is a junior at LSC who regularly writes poetry. He, too, is very quiet and reserved.

Dave "The Rave" Wilkinson is "an eccentric optimist with dreams of showbiz."

Pamela S. Williams is an artist who likes *Argus*.

Thomas A. Zimmerman is a freshman at LSC who doesn't care what is said about him, since he's last anyway.

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